

Friday April 24 1998

Abu Dhabi D 0.50
Algeria FF 10
Australia AS 30
Austria S 10
Belgium BF 10
Brazilian LV 50
Canada C 5.25
Croatia CN 12.50
Cyprus C 2.00
Denmark DK 17
Ecuador EC 0.50
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France FF 10
Germany DM 3.80
Greece D 50
Hong Kong HK 25
Hungary F 250
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Analysis

Fair cops, fair costs

This section, page 11

Ulster parades crisis

Loyalist fury at ban rumours

John Mullin
Ireland Correspondent

THE body tasked with saving Northern Ireland from another chaotic and violent marching season appeared last night after the resignation of its two leading loyalist members.

The departure came shortly after Tony Blair delayed publication of the Parades Commission's initial rulings on marches amid speculation over the role of Ulster Unionist leader David Trimble.

Glen Barr and Tommy Cheevers are thought to be unhappy at the commission's findings and Mr Trimble is also understood to have been severely worried.

Anger in loyalist circles was triggered by suggestions that the Drumcree march, the traditional summer flash-point for loyalist-police clashes, was to be re-routed.

The departure of Mr Barr and Mr Cheevers came less than 24 hours after Mr Blair effectively ordered the Parades Commission to abandon plans to deliver its initial rulings yesterday on a dozen controversial marches. The Government hailed the body as an independent umpire when it was founded.

The role of Mr Trimble in the events of the past two



BLAIR WANTS US TO MARCH THE THIRD WAY.

days appears to have been a key factor. He is also an Orangeman, and his headline support for the Drumcree marchers helped him come from behind to win the party leadership.

Mr Trimble denied suggestions from Martin Smyth, one of six Ulster Unionist MPs opposed to the Stormont deal, that Mr Trimble had been in direct contact with Downing Street before Mr Blair sent his letter to Parades Commission chairman Alistair Graham. Mr Smyth called Mr Blair's intervention "a con job".

But Mr Trimble admitted he had approached a Labour backbencher on Tuesday about his fears that the Parades Commission was poised to come down heavily against the Orangemen. Those concerns are thought to have been passed on to the Prime Minister's staff.

He also revealed that he had contacted Mr Graham hours before Mr Blair became involved. He was unhappy about the contents of the report, and furious that Mr Graham had failed to consult him before the commission arrived at its decisions.

The Ulster Unionist leader described as "furious" any move to ban Orangemen from marching down Garvaghy

Road. He said: "It would be absolute folly to ban this parade. For Drumcree to be interrupted would plunge this province back into conflict."

Mr Barr, one of the leaders of the loyalist workers' strike in 1974, which helped to scupper the Sunningdale political agreement, was the first to go, citing media pressure. He had earlier hinted he was unhappy about the preliminary rulings.

Hours later Mr Cheevers, a member of the Apprentice Boys, quit. He said that he preferred to work in the community for reconciliation between Orangemen and nationalist residents groups.

The Orange Order said the situation was "farcical" and its stance in boycotting the body had been vindicated.

Grand Lodge Secretary John McCrea said: "The events of the last 24 hours have been farcical and prove that the Parades Commission has no credibility."

Joel Patton, leader of the hardline Spirit of Drumcree faction in the order, said the commission had no future and its position was untenable.

Mr Graham denied he was considering resigning but he faces a tough task in rehabilitating the Parades Commission after the events of the past two days.

He said the Parades Commission will now deliver its rulings five days before each march. The RUC can still overturn its decisions on public order grounds on the day.

The two loyalists who left yesterday were appointed to their £25,000-a-year posts only two months ago, a move which infuriated nationalists.

Tensions in Northern Ireland were also heightened when Home Secretary Jack Straw announced that five IRA prisoners, including the Balcombe Street gang and double murderer Paul Magee, were being granted transfers to Portuguese prison in the Irish Republic.

Me and my girl



Foreign Secretary Robin Cook and his wife Gaynor at the Mansion House last night Report, page 2

PHOTOGRAPH: CHRIS WOODS/PA

Cheerio Arts; I'm off to other parts

Dan Glaister
Arts Correspondent

IT is like a missile from another age. Lord Gowrie, outgoing chairman of the Arts Council of England, has said goodbye to his staff in a manner befitting the larger than life personality for which he became known. In advance of his departure at the beginning of next month he has published an extract of a poem in the excitingly titled Arts Council News.

It covers some of the highs and lows of his four-year tenure as Arts Council chairman, as well as nothing the increased workload for the unpaid post.

Among the highlights, Lord Gowrie mentions sculptors Rachel Whiteread and Anthony Gormley, conductors Simon Rattle and Bernard Haitink, painter Lucian Freud and pianist (and fellow part-time poet) Alfred Brendel, whose name he deftly rhymes with Kendal.

The extract from Lord Gowrie's poem ends with the admission that he still hopes to be hanging around stage doors at the age of 91.

Lord Gowrie, who announced his early departure last October, is 58.

The farewell ode is not Lord Gowrie's first excursion into verse. A renowned poetry enthusiast - his other love is jazz - he taught English and American literature at University College, London, at the end of the sixties. A volume of his poetry, *A Postcard From Don Giovanni*, was published to minor acclaim in 1972.

In the Arts Council journal Lord Gowrie also publishes an open "thank you" letter, which displays the rhetorical flourishes that have characterised his public pronouncements. "Editorial Mission Impossible," he writes, "four crowded and critical years; highs and lows; whither civilisation; autobiography."

Reality intrudes as he notes one of the worst points of his time at the Arts Council. "The Big Low was the Royal Opera Company Titanic (but what wonderful evenings on voyage)." He ends the open letter "Love, Grey."

Lord Gowrie leaves the Arts Council on May 1. He will be replaced by Granada chairman Gerry Robinson, praised in Lord Gowrie's resignation as "one of our ablest entrepreneurs" and a man known more for his adroitness with the balance sheet than his facility with verse. It is likely that Lord Gowrie's offering will be the last of its kind.

And when in May I step down too
I'm sure I'll miss it, just like you
(Even as I'll hum, I know,
The chorus from Fiddlers)
Two days a week, they told me
- wow!
I think it's nearly seven now;
Miss as all of us will the day we
Cease to be servus servorum dei.
And even when things blow a fuse,
Miss our devotions to the Muse:
Miss, as others will praise in ditties,
Spreading her word in the inner cities;
Miss Bernard's Meisterstinger.
Ring
And Darcy, who pardons everything,
ENO's 'stabilized' Tales of Hoffman
Almost as much as Gerald Knagman;
Miss daring moments, like the day
The Royal Exchange beat the IRA.
Whiteroad, the Angel, LSO
Simon's Erwartung in full flow,
Resounding cheers in Brum and Kendal.
For Lucien Freud and Alfred Brendel,
Giving poets a little gray -
Our Senior Service, like the Navy.
(I'd better stop: it's clear that my
Church like my Anglicanism's High).

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Austria
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Czech Republic |
| Friday 24 April
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John Banville
Dante Marianacci
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Viera Prokešová
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Outrage at notorious paedophile's escape

Stephen Bates in Brussels

A POLICE blunder which allowed the suspected child murderer and convicted paedophile Marc Dutroux to escape from custody by overpowering a guard at a rural magistrate's court plunged the Belgian government into crisis last night.

The justice minister and interior minister were the first casualties, resigning within hours of the escape.

Dutroux's recapture after three and a half hours did nothing to ease public outrage that the authorities, repeatedly criticised for laxness, could have allowed the country's most notorious prisoner to break free from his guards, taking a gun.

He was recaptured without a fight at the Forest of Chiny, about six miles outside the southern town of Neufchâteau where he had been attending court. Police then



Marc Dutroux: recaptured in forest after 3 1/2 hours

revealed that they routinely disable their weapons before escorting prisoners, so he had been unable to fire at them, just as his guards would have been unable to shoot him.

Stefaan de Clerck, the justice minister, and Johann Vande Lanotte, the interior minister, both resigned as the cabinet went into emergency session.

Dutroux, aged 41, has been in custody for 20 months. He has been charged with the murder of two eight-year-old girls, two teenagers and an associate and the abduction of two more teenagers following the discovery of a paedophile ring operating in the southern city of Charleroi.

Politicians were stunned at the latest evidence of police and judicial incompetence.

Socialist MP Claude Berdoles said: "This is a grotesque Belgian joke that makes our country look ridiculous."

Marc Verwiltghen, chairman of a parliamentary committee that recently condemned the police and magistrates' conduct in the investigation into Dutroux's arrest, turned to page 2, column 7

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Sketch

Sledger who will never shut up



Simon Hoggart

CRICKETERS have a term, "sledging", which means putting off the batsman with a stream of crude insults. Silly mid-on, for example, will mutter, just audibly, "I was knocking your wife last night", not because the batsman believes him, but because the image popping into his head can take 10 per cent off his concentration.

John Bercow, the MP for Buckingham (having had in George Walden one of the most thoughtful and widely admired Tory MPs, the voters there have clearly decided to go for his exact opposite), is a sledger. It's constant. He does not shut up.

Not that he says anything so crude as "knocking your wife". It would be counter-productive. Gordon Brown does not yet have a wife. "That's just pathetic," he shouts. "God, his rhetoric is so boring." "Useless, useless", or simply "Hopeless!"

Throughout Mr Bercow sits in an extraordinary position, with his arms braced against the bench underneath him and his shoulders hunched forward, so that he seems both slumped and poised for action at the same time.

Sometimes he sledges articulately — "I don't believe this stuff!" At other times his synapses fail, and nothing but a loud meaningless gasping noise emerges.

Mr Brown was asked whether he would take steps to bring down the value of the pound by providing a clear timetable for our membership of EMU. (I think we should join today, because the Euro is now worth precisely two-thirds of a pound. This may

not make sense for British exports, but it will make it much easier to work out.)

Mr Brown kicked into his elder-statesman-of-destiny mode and said that the worst thing any government could do was to react to short-term conditions by taking long-term decisions. "Pathetic!" said Mr Bercow.

Tim Boswell derided the Chancellor for handing control of interest rates "to a group of bankers and economists". Mr Brown asked sarcastically if the Tories would repeal the legislation. "You're useless!" Mr Bercow averred.

Dafydd Wigley asked about the plight of agriculture. The Chancellor said that this could all be blamed on BSE which was entirely the Tories' fault. "Slidown! Hopeless!" intimated Mr Bercow.

Next they argued about the strength of the pound. Now that we have a reverse sterling crisis, each side is anxious to blame the other because the pound is worth so much money.

"Two-thirds of the rise in sterling occurred under the last government!" Mr Brown declared, as if accusing them of having despoiled the currency. "God, what is that supposed to mean?" asked Mr Bercow.

"The Tories are not fit for government and not fit for opposition," barked Mr Brown. "A very poor performance," said Mr Bercow, as thoughtfully as he ever says anything.

Next, Ann Taylor, the Leader of the House, announced coming business. "On Friday May 1st," she said, "the House will not be sitting."

Of course it won't. Next weekend marks the Glorious First Anniversary. There will be street parties in every town, whole roasts on a spit across the land, fireworks, free pop for children, and members of the former Tory cabinet burned in effigy. And all to mark the magnificent landslide victory of Britain's Love Shine A Light in last year's Eurovision Song Contest.

Foreign Secretary pays tribute to secret intelligence services for unacknowledged achievements.

Cook brings spies out of cold

Ian Black and Richard Norton-Taylor

ROBIN Cook last night showered Britain's secret intelligence services with unprecedented public praise for adapting to the "fresh priorities" of the Labour government. "The results of their work cannot speak for themselves. The nature of what they do means that we cannot shout about their achievements if we want them to remain effective. But let me say I have been struck by the range and quality of their work."

The Foreign Secretary, flanked for the first time at an official engagement by his new wife, Gaynor, used a formal speech to diplomats and businessmen at the Mansion House to single out the clandestine work of publicity-shy spies and eavesdroppers.

"I would like to pay tribute to the way that the intelligence agencies — the Secret Intelligence Service and GCHQ — have responded to the fresh priorities of the new government," he said.

"The results of their work cannot speak for themselves. The nature of what they do means that we cannot shout about their achievements if we want them to remain effective. But let me say I have been struck by the range and quality of their work."

Mr Cook, reviewing his first year in office, spoke of the agencies' work in tracking terrorist groups, "disrupting their operations and breaking their weapons supply chains" and in revealing

Iraq's continuing attempts to stockpile banned chemical and biological weapons.

In a rare reference to a specific operational activity, he added: "They have tracked Iran's nuclear weapons programme and have enabled us to disrupt Iranian attempts to procure British technology."

He also praised them for tracking drugs barons and international organised crime, increasingly a post-cold war priority for the security and intelligence services which no longer focus on what they regarded as an overwhelming Soviet threat.

David Spedding, regularly crosses the river Thames from his palatial Vauxhall Cross headquarters to see his ministerial boss. The Foreign Secretary has made trips in the opposite direction.

"Mr Cook had further to travel than his predecessors," an intelligence source said yesterday in a reference to the Foreign Secretary's leaving credentials rather than to the distance between the FO in Whitehall and MI6's headquarters.

The new director of GCHQ, Kevin Tebbit, may feel more at home since he is himself a senior FO official and his agency, working closely with the American National Security Agency, played a key role

in monitoring Iraqi communication during the recent crisis on weapons inspections.

GCHQ, with an annual budget of £440 million, has been quietly shifting its priorities from diplomatic and military targets to countering terrorism, money-laundering and drug trafficking. In 1996, it played a key role in the seizure of cocaine at Heathrow airport — a success attributed at the time to Customs officers.

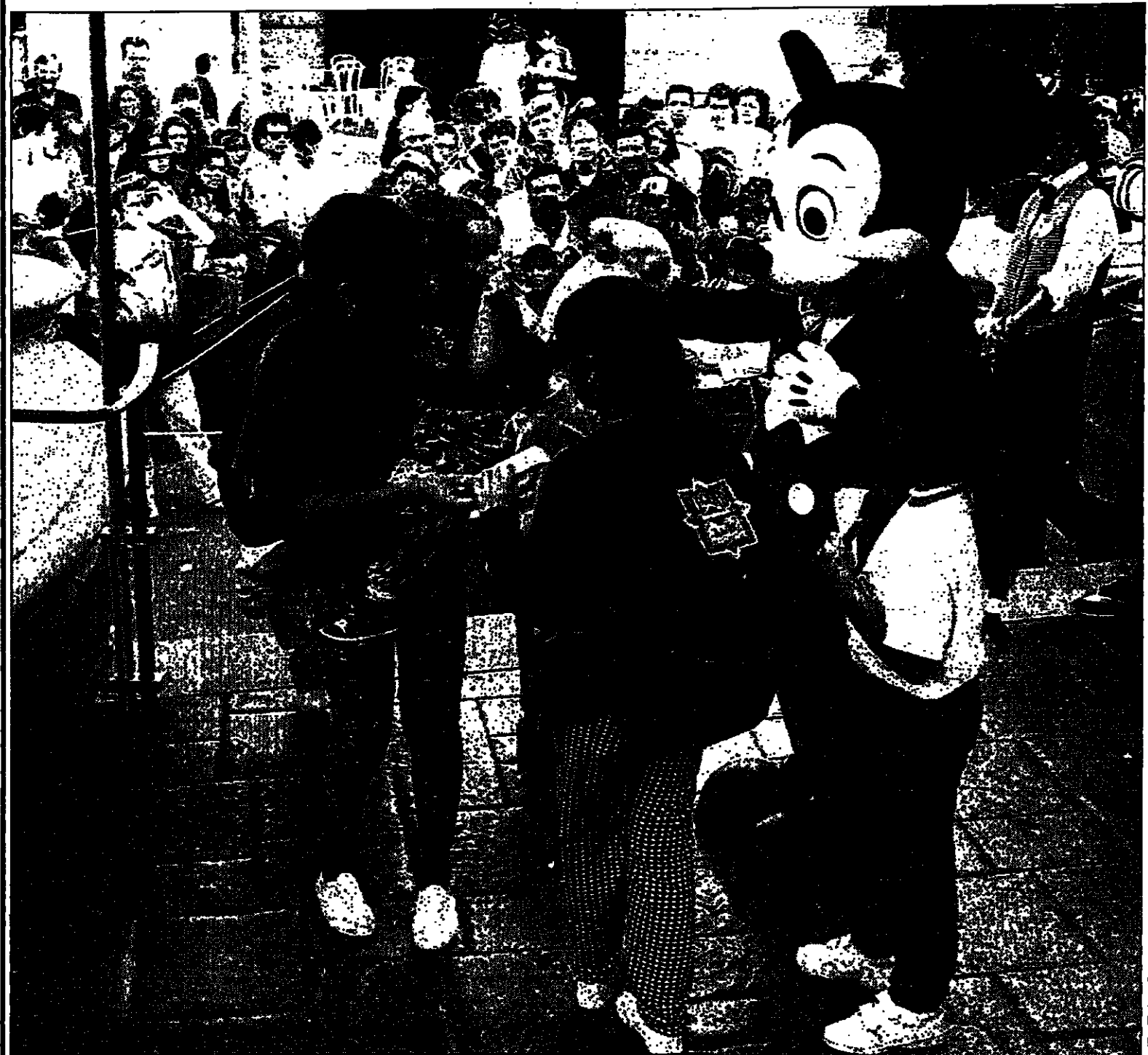
MI6, which has a budget of about £150 million, has also told its agents abroad to concentrate more on targets — including international crime — which threaten Britain's "economic well-being" as well as terrorism and the prolifer-

ation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.

Mr Cook's warm embrace of MI6 and GCHQ comes at a time when they are being subjected to an unprecedented, Treasury-driven, comprehensive spending review. The agencies last night made it clear that they welcomed the Foreign Secretary's remarks, but refused to elaborate.

In a week which has already seen Mr Cook trumpeting his policy on human rights and expounding the Blairite "third way," he went on to claim last night that Britain's security had been enhanced by "the strengthened alliance" with the United States.

Leader comment, page 13



Mickey Mouse does the rounds at Disneyland Paris. But have he and his employers turned US culture into a laughing stock? PHOTOGRAPH BY ALEX HAMILTON

Disney magic wears off

Joanna Coles in New York

CARL HIASSEN, the United States' leading comic novelist, has written a devastating critique accusing the Walt Disney corporation of reducing the country to a meaningless junk culture, which is ridiculed across the world.

The book, produced in secret, will be published next month by Random House and is sure to spark a debate over the role of a company which has an increasing influence on US popular culture.

As well as its theme parks and film studios, Walt Disney also owns the ABC television network, which supplies much of the US's news.

The book is expected to have significant influence because Mr Hiasen's work appeals to a wide spectrum. He is thought to have spoken to scores of former Disney employees during his research.

The book comes at a bad time for the corporation. Last weekend it invited 1,700 journalists to Florida to admire its new Animal Kingdom theme park. But the department of agriculture has announced it is launching an investigation into the deaths of several animals at the park.

Both Mr Hiasen and his publisher refused to speak yesterday and review copies will not be available until the day of publication. No one at Disney was available to comment.

Review

Laughter that hides dark deeds

Michael Billington

The Real Inspector Hound/Black Comedy Comedy Theatre

THIS is a witty and delicious pairing of two classic comedies of the Sixties by, respectively, Stoppard and Shaffer. One contrasts reality and illusion; the other light and dark. What links them is the way they feed off the conventions of theatre itself.

Stoppard's play famously confronts two theatre critics, a vengeful deputy and a philanthropic first-string, with a creaky country-house thriller of the kind, thankfully, they don't write any more.

The skill lies in the way the two aisle-squatters are drawn into the stage events and are thus fatally able to act out their vindictive and lubricious fantasies.

At the risk of sounding like the pretentious deputy, Moon, the play is partly about the dangers of wish-fulfilment. But what keeps it alive is Stoppard's merciless parody of the fog-bound whodunit in which the characters lob great chunks of exposition at each other and the comic char is forever on the phone.

As played by Nicholas McAuliffe, with bedraggled stockings, a hat that looks like a curving pancake and a fearful, premonitory stare, she turns out to be the funniest character, in that she reminds us just how much the rep thriller de-

pended on condescending class stereotypes.

Like Stoppard's play, Shaffer's Black Comedy also hinges on a highly theatrical concept: a famous Peking Opera sketch in which two men, supposedly fighting in the dark, are brilliantly illuminated.

What is astonishing, however, is the way Shaffer wrings endless variations on the basic joke in which a South Ken sculptor, while entertaining his fiancée's father during a blown fuse, manages to return all the furniture and objects d'art he has secretly borrowed from his antique-dealing neighbour.

Shaffer has a serious point to make: that only in darkness are hidden truths revealed. But what makes us laugh inordinately are the alarming physical consequences of people stumbling around in a supposed black-out. It becomes a play about the treachery of inanimate objects.

But it is also very much a director's and actors' piece. Greg Doran's production has the right frenzied choreography and there are very funny performances from David Tennant as the deceitful sculptor, Desmond Barritt as the neighbouring antique dealer, who suggests camp on the verge of being struck, and Geoffrey Freshwater as the repair man mistaken for a millionaire art lover.

This review appeared in some editions yesterday.

Yeltsin threatens defiant Duma

MPs must back his man or risk one-way ticket out of Moscow

James Mack in Moscow

THE Kremlin yesterday turned the screws ahead of today's third and final vote on the fate of Boris Yeltsin's candidate for prime minister, Sergei Kiriyenko, as the Communist Party ordered its 138 deputies in the lower house to reject him.

If the MPs obey the party's central committee, the acting premier's candidature is likely to fall again and Mr Yeltsin will dissolve parliament. Reacting to the Communist threat, the Kremlin has made

it clear to all deputies that the dissolution of parliament would mean swift eviction from their Moscow flats and a one-way ticket back to their constituencies.

Mr Yeltsin has never concealed his contempt for the lower house, the state Duma, and the intimidation of deputies in the past few days suggests that even if Mr Kiriyenko is approved today the bitter feud between president and parliament will continue.

If the Duma does vote against the prime minister-designate and is dissolved, the constitution says new elections should be held on

July 26. But it does not make clear what happens to the 450 "dissolved" deputies and their families during the three-month interregnum.

The Kremlin has decided that dissolution means wiping away all traces of the Duma elected in 1995. Since parliament has no control over its own expenses, it is wholly dependent on the grace and favour of the president's household steward, Pavel Borodin.

Newspapers yesterday published details of a circular distributed among MPs warning that if they voted against Mr Kiriyenko they would have to vacate their Moscow flats within a month and their offices even earlier.

Most deputies could not legally remain in Moscow

under such circumstances because of mayor Yuri Luzhkov's (unconstitutional) insistence on retaining the Soviet system of residence permits.

In another heavy-handed attempt to put pressure on deputies, Alexander Ivanchenko, the Yeltsin appointee who heads the central electoral commission, warned that conflicting laws might prevent any of the parties currently in the Duma, including the Communists, legally taking part in early elections.

The president has indicated through a senior legal aide, Sergei Shakhrai, that he is considering challenging the constitutional court by unilaterally changing election law to suit himself once the Duma is dissolved.

Outrage in Belgium after paedophile flees court

continued from page 1

tivities, said: "It is incredible that someone with such a criminal past could escape. He is our public enemy number one whose escape should have been inconceivable. Ministerial resignations are a minimum."

Dutroux had been at the court to look at papers relating to his case. Reports said he pushed one of his two guards to the ground, took his gun and was able to run straight out of the building and hijack a car.

Roadblocks were set up at the nearby border crossings while police helicopters joined the hunt and troops stood by as hundreds of police searched the remote and heavily-wooded area around the town.

The discovery of Dutroux's alleged activities and their scale in August 1996 sent a shockwave through Belgium.

The two eight-year-olds reportedly starved to death in a specially-built cell in the basement of Dutroux's house, where they had spent eight months after being abducted from Liege 60 miles away. Police searched the house three times while the children were still alive but never found them, despite hearing cries.

The trials of Dutroux and his associates, including his wife, are expected to begin later this year. He is already a convicted sex offender and was released in 1992 after serving four years of a 15-year sentence for rape and abduction.

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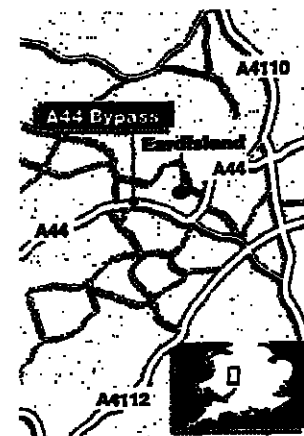
صوكزا من الامل

Traffic and the community



Bardisland, a quiet backwater where villagers want to reverse 10 years of measures designed to keep traffic away

PHOTOGRAPH: NAT LYSTER



No more cars whizzing past the Norman church, no more lorries thundering down the main street and no more busloads of tourists clogging up the roads around the 15th century wooden houses. And then no more business...

Alarm on the road to stagnation

Stuart Millar tells the tale of two villages that want to return to the business of modern living

A DECADE ago, the 200 residents of Bardisland held a little celebration. After a long and determined campaign, they had taken a small step in returning the Worcestershire backwater to the rural idyll it once was — they got rid of the traffic. With the stroke of a pen, Hereford and Worcester council redesignated a few roads and gave the locals more than they had ever dared to dream. No more cars whizzing past the Norman church, no more lorries thundering down the main street and no more busloads of tourists clogging up the roads around the 15th century wooden houses. Ten years on, the dream has turned sour. In a cautionary tale to those desperate to fend off the trappings of modern living, the villagers have launched another campaign: to attract the traffic back. Bardisland is not alone. On the other side of the country, shopkeepers in Southwater, West Sussex, are urging councillors to dig up traffic-calming measures which they claim have been too successful at keeping cars away from the centre, destroying their businesses.

Both villages have discovered that peace and quiet may be pleasant, but being too quiet makes poor business sense. In Bardisland, two village shops have closed in recent years, and locals now believe that their community may die altogether without drastic action. Even the pubs, the 17th-century Swan and the Cross, are feeling the pinch. Now they are taking action to tempt tourists back to admire the meandering River Arrow and the apple orchards which surround the village. The most striking evidence of their traffic U-turn comes on the road they once hailed as their saviour. Ten years ago, the council turned the Leominster to Brecon A4112 into a village bypass, renaming it the A44. The old A44, which cut through the heart of the village, was redesignated a B-road. Now, two large signs hang on the new A44, urging motorists to turn on to the B-road. The campaign does not end there. A new picnic area has been created at a cost of £18,000. Another £80,000 in grants will be spent on other

improvements, and the village has joined a route of local trails to bring the punters back. The realities of late 20th century rural life have returned to Bardisland. "The by-passing of the village did remove a lot of through traffic," said Barry Freeman, chairman of the Association for the Promotion of Herefordshire. "Tourism is the second largest form of income for the county. We are now bracing ourselves for the tourism season to begin and we hope that there will be thousands of visitors." In Southwater, the new road system was introduced amid concern about the speed and volume of traffic travelling through the village, with some cars doing more than 50mph as they passed by homes and businesses. But rather than merely slowing drivers down outside the shops, traders complain, the council has completely removed them from the heart of the village. "The obvious intention with the traffic calming is to stop it being used as a short cut," said Robert Morris, who runs a caravan business. "But I think the measures are totally unnecessary. It has certainly stopped people coming in from outlying areas. For people that are dependent on passing trade, like the bakers and some of the local shops, it is more difficult." Anthony Harling, the local baker, is in no doubt the new road system is working — he

claims it is calming him out of business and costing £1,400 a month in trade. "A lot of shopkeepers, not just myself, have felt the effects in a drop in trade," he said. "It seems to me that I am fighting a losing battle. Traffic from the surrounding villages doesn't come through any more. The council says it is all in a good cause. But where I am, you could quite happily have breakfast in the middle of the road."



Southwater baker Anthony Harling. "You could have breakfast in the middle of the road"

PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID MORRISON

Father 'gave baby HIV jabs to avoid child support'

Martin Kettle in Washington

POLICE in Missouri have charged a hospital worker with first degree assault after he allegedly injected his own son with HIV-infected blood. The accused man, Brian Stewart, apparently had hoped his son's death would free him from the need to make disputed child maintenance payments to his divorced wife. In a case which has shocked even the most horror-hardened Americans, Mr Stewart, aged 31, was arrested on Tuesday and charged with the lethal assault on his son. The assault took place in 1992, when the boy was 11 months old. He is now seven and suffers from full-blown Aids. Mr Stewart, from Columbia, Illinois, is in custody in St Charles, Missouri, pending his forthcoming trial, after failing to raise a half million dollar bail bond. If convicted on a charge of first degree assault, he could be jailed for life. "If the allegations are true, it's horrendous," prosecutor Tim Braun told the press. "Everyone involved is disgusted."

His son, who was born in February 1991, was injected with the infected blood while being treated for respiratory problems at the St Charles County hospital in Lake St Louis in February 1992, police officials said.

The boy had been expected to stay in hospital overnight, but his condition had suddenly worsened dramatically and he had been in and out of hospital for the next four years.

They added that Mr Stewart and the boy's mother broke up not long after their son was born. After the marriage breakdown, Mr Stewart refused to agree to the mother's requests for financial support.

He claimed he was not the boy's father, but a paternity test several years later showed that he was.

In 1997 Mr Stewart was finally ordered to pay his ex-wife \$267 a month in child support.

Prosecutors said suspicions were aroused when doctors discovered that the boy was HIV-positive when tested during a stay in hospital in 1996, and neither they nor the parents could account for how he might have contracted the deadly disease. The boy was diagnosed with Aids in May 1996.

Mr Stewart came under suspicion because during the paternity contest he had told the boy's mother that she would not be able to collect on the child support payments that the courts had ordered because their son would not live that long.

She had not followed the remark up at first, Detective Kevin Wilson told reporters, because "it was the furthest thing from her mind that something as diabolical as this could happen".

I'm off, are you? Independent editor ready to join Express

Kamal Ahmed Media Correspondent

ROSIE Boycott, the editor of the Independent, was set to quit last night — a month after the newspaper announced that it was to be run by the "dream team" of her and Andrew Marr.

The remarkable announcement, expected today, brings to an end the short relationship between Ms Boycott and Mr Marr and is the latest twist in the newspaper's troubled history.

In March, the paper's owners announced that Ms Boycott and Mr Marr would edit the paper in tandem, despite deep differences in style and outlook.

"You feel like finding a hook, putting your tie around it and hanging yourself," said one journalist at the newspaper, which has seen three changes at the top in the past three months and declining circulation.

Ms Boycott is expected to join the Express newspaper, owned by Lord Hollick, with her deputy Chris Blackhurst.

Richard Addis, the Express's present editor, is expected to announce his resignation from the £160,000 a year job today.

The Marr-Boycott team was announced in a blaze of publicity when Tony O'Reilly, the Irishman who made a fortune as the head of the Heinz empire, took control of the newspaper six weeks ago.

Mr Marr, who was sacked from the newspaper in January when it was under the control of the Mirror group, returned to edit the comment pages and Ms Boycott was given control of the rest of the newspaper.

Media analysts immediately questioned how the "double-header" system would operate and insiders said that cracks immediately started appearing.

Mr Marr was known to be upset that Ms Boycott, who took over the operation of the newspaper when he was sacked, had ripped apart his redesign which had seen the paper's circulation dip to a record low of just above 200,000.

Mr Marr was also unhappy with the campaign to legislate cannabis run by the Independent on Sunday, originally introduced by Ms Boycott when she was the editor of the newspaper.

The last straw was said to have been an editorial run by Mr Marr which questioned the legalise cannabis campaign.

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Mark Kettle SILENT MAGNET



Farmers deny link between antibiotics given to animals and untreatable 'superbugs'

Supermarkets move to ban growth-drug meat from shelves

Paul Brown
Environment Correspondent

SUPERMARKETS moved yesterday to ban meat in their stores from farmers who had used antibiotics as growth promoters, after it was revealed that the practice had led to the development of untreatable superbugs.

Farmers yesterday denied there was a link between the use of antibiotics for intensive rearing of poultry and pigs and the development of drug-resistant bacteria, but a number of scientists called for stricter controls and said the evidence was overwhelming.

The controversy follows a House of Lords report which said that overuse of antibiotics was in danger of rendering them useless, and making killer diseases like

TB and pneumonia virtually untreatable.

Tesco, the largest supermarket chain, said it had already had a policy of ensuring drugs were only used to treat specific illnesses and not routinely in feed by farmers to promote growth.

Asda said it was drawing up new guidelines for its meat suppliers aimed at cutting down the use of antibiotics and promoting "best practice" across the board.

Sainsbury's said it deliberately restricted the use of antibiotics to help prevent resistance. Suppliers were only allowed to use them under veterinary supervision to treat animals suffering from infections.

Meat produced under the Freedom Food label — a scheme monitored by the RSPCA which ensures strict standards of animal husband-

ry — has not been produced with any antibiotic growth promoters, and antibiotics can only be used to treat specific illness.

The National Farmers' Union has already set up a working party to investigate the issue, but insisted drugs were a vital tool for farmers to safeguard the health and well-being of their animals.

NFU president Ben Gill said tests showed 99.9 per cent of meat contained no trace of the drugs which had been fed to animals, and insisted there was no evidence to link use of antibiotics on farms with human resistance to drugs. "It's a complicated issue, but the myth that drugs are being used indiscriminately on farms is very wide of the mark," he said.

The House of Lords reported that there was a link between bacteria that become

resistant because of use of antibiotics in the food of farm animals and bacteria that subsequently attack humans.

Charles Hart, professor of medical microbiology at the University of Liverpool, said the use of growth promoters belonging to classes of drug likely to be used to treat humans "should be phased out". He added: "The veterinary use of antimicrobials such as fluorquinolones, which are so important in treating human infection, should be used only in strictly defined circumstances."

Following the report, Compassion in World Farming called for a ban on the use of growth promoting antibiotics, saying animals were already being forced to grow unnaturally big and too fast.

A spokesman said: "We believe feeding animals antibiotics to make them grow

more is unethical. Food safety and animal welfare on farms are two sides of the same coin. Given that the consequences to human health of using growth promoters are so unclear, we feel they should be banned."

The Government is carrying out a review of the overuse of antibiotics and is likely to try and cut over-prescribing and curb farm use. Health Secretary Frank Dobson called the House of Lords report "valuable, constructive and timely", and said the Government would study the recommendations closely and issue a response in due course.

He added: "Antimicrobial resistance is to some extent an inevitable result of antibiotic use, but the increasing prevalence of resistant strains is something which the Government takes very seriously."

French face fine over World Cup fiasco

John Duncan and
Jon Henley in Paris

WORLD CUP organisers face a multi-million pound fine by the European Commission after Wednesday's ticketing fiasco.

The French are accused of blatantly ignoring European law in continuing to prefer French citizens to those of other EU countries in allocation of tickets.

Under European competition regulations all EU citizens have equal rights in the sale of goods and it is illegal to favour one nationality over another.

The French ignored that law when they put the first batch of tickets — nearly 2½ million of them — on sale last year. They were only available on the Minitel system, exclusive to France, and purchasers required a French address.

The commission has the power to fine the organisers

10 per cent of the estimated \$150 million profits from the tournament. The French were told last month to redress the balance by releasing the remaining 100,000 tickets exclusively to non-French citizens, a threat they ignored in setting up the World Cup hotline.

Not only were French citizens given access to the tickets, but there were more operators per caller available on a special French-only line. The debacle was discussed at a meeting in London be-

tween the French sports minister, Marie-George Buffet, the British Culture Secretary, Chris Smith, and the Sports Minister, Tony Banks.

Mr Smith said after the meeting: "We have asked the French authorities to consider allocating a specific telephone number to each game, in order to eliminate the chaos that has occurred in the last two days."

There is increasing concern over the French organisers' alleged bias towards French

citizens and against England fans. Lee Basanover, who lives in California, told Radio Five Live: "I got through to the line and thought I'd have a crack at the cup. But the operator told me they had already sold out. I heard the next day they had only sold 15,000 tickets so I rang again. This time I spoke in French and said I was an American but that I had an address in Germany. They said: 'No problem, have as many England tickets as you want'."



Linda McCartney, in a picture by her daughter Mary, not long before she died. Police in California yesterday said inquiries into her death would go on. PHOTOGRAPH: MARY MCCARTNEY

Family admits 'decoy' move over death of Linda McCartney

Luke Harding and
Christopher Reed
in Los Angeles

THE family of Linda McCartney yesterday admitted misleading the police and public over the circumstances surrounding her final days, but dismissed growing speculation that her death had been "assisted" as total rubbish.

A McCartney family spokesman confirmed she had not died in California, as first reported, but at a secluded ranch owned by Sir Paul near Tucson, Arizona. The public had been deceived, he said, in an attempt to guarantee privacy for the family.

But California police yesterday said inquiries into the

death would continue. "We would like nothing better than to call off this investigation," said Lt Deborah Linden of Santa Barbara police. "But we need official confirmation of the location of her death."

The confusion began when the family failed to produce a death certificate and cremation document as required by law.

Geoff Baker, Sir Paul's spokesman, yesterday confirmed Linda had spent the last days of her life at the family's 151-acre ranch in Arizona. Its existence had been a closely guarded secret.

According to the Arizona Daily Star, the McCartneys were at the ranch for several days before she died last Friday. She was cremated at a funeral parlour in nearby

Tucson. A death certificate, signed by a doctor from the University of Arizona, was lodged with the Tucson coroner.

Mr Baker yesterday dismissed speculation that she had not died of natural causes as "absolute rubbish, total nonsense".

He admitted tricking the media into thinking Linda had died in Santa Barbara, but said he was trying to keep secret the existence of the family's Arizona home.

"It was a decoy — it was nothing to do with the McCartneys, it was my decision," Mr Baker said, describing the ranch as "the only place on this planet where the McCartney family has enjoyed any anonymity for the past 20 years".

Rumours surrounding the manner of Lady McCartney's death yesterday forced her doctor, Larry Norton, to intervene. "It is his medical opinion that she died of natural causes with metastatic breast cancer," his hospital in Manhattan said in a statement.

The McCartney family has now returned to their home near Rye, East Sussex. Sir Paul yesterday renewed his plea for privacy.

Sir Paul reportedly paid almost \$1.8 million for his Arizona home in 1979.

Ex-trade watchdog backs newspaper price control

Michael White
Political Editor

THE Government's insistence that no legal changes are needed to prevent "predatory pricing" in the newspaper industry were rejected last night by Lord Borrie, former director general of the Office of Fair Trading and a Labour peer.

After a meeting with Paddy Ashdown, the Liberal Democrat leader, to discuss controversial Lords amendments to the Competition Bill, Lord Borrie confirmed he does not accept claims by Margaret Beckett's team of industry ministers that the so-called McNally amendment is "unnecessary and unworkable".

The bill's existing Clause 18 is said to give ministers enough power to intervene if they wish. But Lord McNally's addition — Clause 19 — would shift the burden of proof from intention to the effect of a price war.

"The OFT has been frustrated two or three times, having looked at predatory pricing but being unable to take any action because no one has been able to prove a particular organisation had the intention of destroying a specific rival," Lord Borrie revealed.

With Tony Blair's government keen not to fall out with Rupert Murdoch's powerful media interests over price cutting — which has especially hurt the Telegraph and Independent newspaper

groups in the past five years — Lord Borrie's views are an embarrassment ahead of the Competition Bill's delayed second reading in the Commons, to be staged on May 5.

To add to Downing Street's discomfort, Mr Ashdown released a leaked letter written to a voter by Tony Lane, a civil servant who became deputy director general of fair trading. It sets out advice to the small group of Labour and Lib Dem MPs set to press for retention of the McNally amendment, passed with cross-party support in the Lords.

"It is not unnecessary because a special importance attaches to the diversity of the newspaper press," Mr Lane wrote. "The importance of it goes beyond the need for competition in the supply of ordinary goods and services. The 'democracy' arguments for this are familiar."

He continued: "The usual criteria applicable to predatory pricing have already been tried by the OFT and found unequal to the task." The special case is already implicit in rules which govern newspaper takeovers, Mr Lane argues, warning that "nothing can be gained by changing tack in the hope of appeasing or accommodating government objections".

Ministers expect to win the Commons confrontation, but at some political cost. Mr Blair believes Mr Murdoch's courtship to neutralise his group's historic hostility to Labour. But many Labour MPs are uneasy.

"The OFT has been frustrated two or three times, having looked at predatory pricing but being unable to act" — Lord Borrie

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New cloning row

Dolly's lamb angers animal activists

John Eazard

A RECENTLY born healthy lamb became one of the most contentious and frowned-on creatures in human or animal history yesterday.

The lamb, which has been named Bonnie, is the first offspring of Dolly, the world's first cloned sheep. As her birth 10 days ago was disclosed in Edinburgh, a poll found that 81 per cent of adults are opposed to cloning animals.

This result led animal welfare charities to call for a ban on animal cloning on grounds that the potential for suffering and exploitation through the technique was too great.

The Roslin Institute, where the lamb was born, said the ability of clones to produce healthy offspring was important to "commercialisation" of the nuclear transfer technique which produced Dolly.

The technique is expected to lead to genetically manipulated sheep and other creatures being used to generate herds or flocks by a chain of ordinary breeding.

Bonnie, weighing 13.2lb, was born on April 13. Staff said she and Dolly were in good health after a normal delivery. Dolly, born at the institute in July 1996, was mated naturally at the end of last year with a Welsh mountain ram.

Both animals were said to be spending much of their time indoors. To minimise stress on them, the Roslin Institute issued pictures but refused access to photographers and reporters. Graham Bullfield, the director, said

yesterday: "We are delighted, the birth of Dolly's lamb confirms that she is able to breed normally and to produce healthy offspring."

Her health so far is expected to lessen fears that Dolly may be liable to age-related disorders after being cloned from a six-year-old adult. Since she is a Finn Dorset mated with a ram of a different breed, her offspring is not thought likely to grow up to be an identical copy.

The Institute has said that much of the practical benefit of the cloning of Dolly lies in its contribution to efforts to understand diseases like cystic fibrosis and emphysema.

It has emphasised that it would never clone humans, while conceding that there is no scientific reason why its technique could not be used to do this.

Joyce D'Silva, director of the charity Compassion in World Farming, which produced yesterday's NOP poll with the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection, said: "Our poll shows that people don't want to see the cloning technology, with all its potential for suffering and exploitation, used on animals. We urge the Government to halt these experiments."

Cloning procedures often involved surgical procedures to harvest egg cells and the killing of the surrogate mother animal, animal welfare groups said.

A number of cloned animals had developed malformed internal organs. There were also fears that any herd of cloned animals used in agriculture would be vulnerable to disease because of the reduced gene pool from which they were drawn.



Dolly, the cloned sheep, with her lamb, Bonnie, at the Roslin Institute in Edinburgh

Britain worst for asthma in children

Owen Bowcott

C HILTHOOD asthma, which affects at least a million youngsters in the United Kingdom, is more common in this country than almost anywhere else in the world, an international study revealed yesterday.

Only the Republic of Ireland, Australia and New Zealand match Britain for the number of children reporting asthma symptoms, according to a report in the *Lancet*. As many as 3 million people in the UK suffer from the condition, which causes around 2,000 deaths a year.

The investigation for the International Study of Asthma and Allergies in Childhood was carried out in 58 countries and involved 483,801 children aged 13 and 14.

Researchers led by Richard Beasley, from Wellington, New Zealand, asked them questions about various asthma and allied symptoms, including inflammation of the nasal passages and eyes (known as allergic rhinoconjunctivitis) and allergic skin disorder (atopic eczema).

The investigators found wide variations in the incidence of the condition between different countries, suggesting environmental factors may be critical to the development of the disorder in childhood. For asthma, the highest levels were found in the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and the

Republic of Ireland, followed by North, Central and South America. The condition was less frequently observed in eastern European countries, Indonesia, Greece, China, Taiwan, Uzbekistan, India and Ethiopia.

The pattern was less clear for these patients suffering from inflammation of the nasal passages and eyes. They were found in research centres scattered across the world. Likewise, the highest incidence of those afflicted by allergic skin disorder included certain Scandinavian countries and some in Africa which do not have the highest asthma record.

Writing in the *Lancet*, the researchers note: "The variation in the prevalence of asthma, allergic rhinoconjunctivitis and atopic eczema symptoms is striking between different centres throughout the world."

A Dutch study published in the *British Medical Journal* yesterday suggested that asthma was more common in women than men.

One of the causes most commonly blamed for triggering asthma attacks in childhood are dust mites, which live in pillows and mattresses. Their droppings are widely thought to contain the allergens which sensitise young children.

● The first case of malaria in western Europe in 20 years has been detected in Italy, causing doctors to warn that eradication of the disease in Europe cannot be taken for granted.

Three men fined £1,200 for digging up 7,000 bluebells

T HREE men were yesterday fined for their part in plundering thousands of bluebell bulbs from an historic wood.

It is thought to be the first successful prosecution against taking bluebell bulbs, which are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act.

Magistrates in Fakenham, Norfolk, heard that the men from Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, were initially spotted by an off-duty detective at Keeper's Wood near Thurstford, Norfolk, last August.

The following day plainclothes officers watched the wood and saw Leonard Read,

aged 61, Maurice Crawley, 35, and Mark Lyons, 25.

When police searched Read's van they found more than 7,000 bluebell bulbs, forks, nets and plastic trays.

Read was found guilty of handling stolen bulbs and aiding and abetting in the uprooting of bulbs. He had denied both charges.

Crawley was found guilty of uprooting wild plants and stealing bluebells. He had also denied all charges.

Lyons admitted stealing and uprooting bulbs.

Magistrates fined Read and Crawley £500 plus £200 costs. Lyons was fined £200 and ordered to pay £45 costs.

Nuclear fuel arrival sparks alert

Lawrence Donegan

S ECUITY at the Dounreay nuclear plant in northern Scotland was heightened and all police leave was cancelled yesterday amid growing speculation that a shipment of nuclear material from the former Soviet Union will arrive this weekend.

Officials in the Georgian capital of Tbilisi confirmed the shipment of enriched uranium and spent fuel had left a research reactor in the state on the first leg of its journey to Britain. It is expected to be flown on a US military plane to Wick airport and make the 30-mile journey north to Dounreay by road.

The weapons grade material will be stored at the Scottish plant for at least three years, until Dounreay has facilities to undertake reprocessing work. Both plants capable of undertaking the task have been closed for the past 18 months and Dounreay's plan to convert a laboratory is currently being investigated by the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency.

Britain has agreed to take four kilograms of enriched uranium and about 1kg of spent nuclear fuel as part of an international effort to stop it falling into terrorist hands in the former Soviet Union.

Its arrival in Britain has sparked a furious response from green campaigners, who claim Britain's part in the deal has been surrounded by

"excessive secrecy". However, the local response has been muted. Lorraine Mann, convenor of Scotland Against Nuclear Dumping, said yesterday she was "relaxed" about the material's transfer to this country.

"We are not happy about it coming here. But on the other hand, storing it here is preferable to it going back to Georgia, where it can't be looked after properly," she said.

It is thought likely that environmental groups will mount a demonstration when the material arrives this weekend. A spokesman for Dounreay's operators, the Atomic Energy Authority, declined to comment on details of the shipment's transfer for "security reasons".

The Scottish National Party

leader, Alex Salmond, said yesterday that he doubted the Government's insistence that the nuclear material from Georgia will be turned into fuel to be used for manufacturing medical isotopes for treating cancer victims.

"I have expert information from manufacturers who say that you do not use weapons-grade uranium for medical isotopes. The only thing that it can be used for commercially is to manufacture atomic warheads," he claimed.

But a spokesman for Dounreay described the SNP leader's remarks as "ridiculous". "This is patent nonsense and is based on ignorance of the capabilities of the nuclear industry and Dounreay's operations," he said.

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There are few groups of people you can respectably hate any more. Paedophiles are the very thing. This is one explanation but it is not enough to account for the week's events in Yeovil.

Decca Aitkenhead

Comment, page 12

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Judge recommends minimum 20-year term for man who imprisoned and tortured girlfriend's daughter

'Evil and dangerous' killer of girl, 7, jailed for life

David Ward

A MAN described by a judge as "not only evil but dangerous" was jailed for life yesterday for the murder of a seven-year-old girl he tortured after a row over washing her hands.

The jury was told that Paul Gayer, aged 32, had inflicted more than 100 injuries on Suzanne Rarity, the daughter of his girlfriend, before she died curled up on a mattress as the result of blows to her chest, stomach and bottom.

He had beaten her with a stick, attacked her with a table fork and pulled out her hair with a lavatory brush.

Gayer, a drug addict, had run away when he found her lifeless body, leaving a note in which he admitted beating Suzanne and said he was scared of what people might think of him.

He changed his plea to guilty on the second day of his trial at Manchester crown court and Mr Justice Brown recommended that he should serve at least 20 years.



Suzanne Rarity: body had more than 100 injuries

"In the last week of her life you kept [Suzanne] prisoner in her room and towards the end of the week you treated her with the utmost violence," said the judge as he passed sentence. "You tortured her, beat her, punched her and almost certainly kicked her."

"The result of your inhu-

man cruelty was that she received five heavy blows which caused internal bleeding from which she died. I have never encountered such systematic violent infliction of injury upon a young, defenceless girl. I regard you as not only evil but dangerous."

The court heard that Suzanne died on June 22 last year, after being imprisoned in her room at home in Moss Side, Manchester, for five days. Her body was not discovered until 36 hours later, after Gayer had disappeared, leaving the bedroom keys and a letter to Suzanne's mother Angela on the mantelpiece.

He described how he had tried to revive Suzanne after finding her motionless and added: "I was so scared I didn't know what to do. I'm sorry to leave this way but I'm so scared because of Suzanne's bruises. I'm scared of what people might think of me for giving her so many on her bum and back."

"It was all down to me. I'm so confused at the moment. I just wish it was me dead and not her."

The jury was shown a 32-

minute police video of the Rarities' home which included footage of Suzanne's badly bruised body curled up on a mattress on the floor.

Charles Garside QC, prosecuting, said Gayer had moved in with Ms Rarity in April 1997 and had dominated family life.

On June 16 Gayer decided that Suzanne was lying when she said she had washed her hands. He locked her in her room and kept the keys. "He slept with them on him," Mr Garside told the court. "Suzanne never left the house after that. Essentially Gayer took charge of her."

Ms Rarity told the jury she could not get near her daughter. "Do you think if I could have done something to save her I wouldn't have done it?"

Detective Chief Inspector Mike Williams of Greater Manchester police said after the hearing: "That was the blackest day of my career — having to see that little girl in the state she was in. It's the worst injuries I've seen inflicted on anyone, never mind a seven-year-old girl. This is a just result."



Paul Gayer: ran away after finding Suzanne's motionless body, leaving a note admitting he had beaten her

News in brief

Death flight women were urged not to go

A FAMILY have told of their grief at the loss of two daughters in a helicopter crash which has left three children orphaned.

Andrew Byrne, 58, his wife Helen Linhart, 51, and her sister, Katie Linhart, 28, died in the tragedy near Market Harborough, Leicestershire, on Sunday evening.

Speaking at the family home in Desford, Leicestershire, Michael Linhart, 72, told how he asked his daughters not to go on the fatal flight. Andrew and Helen had cancelled a trip to France in favour of the helicopter ride and invited Katie along. The couple leave three children — Jade, six, Jana, five, and Dominic, four — who will be brought up by their grandparents. Pilot James Coulter, 38, from Market Harborough, also died.

Mr Linhart said: "They should have been in France but the weather was bad so they cancelled. I asked them not to go but they said they were going for a meal. I hugged Katie and I said to her 'come back in one piece', I said it twice."

Nanny given bail

THE Australian nanny Louise Sullivan, accused in connection with the death of six-month-old Caroline Jorgensen, was given conditional bail by an Old Bailey judge yesterday. Sullivan, who was not in court for the 40-minute bail application, will be released on £2,500 surety to reside at a fixed address.

She is due to appear at Clerkenwell magistrates court again next Monday, a police spokesman said. She has already appeared at the same court charged with causing grievous bodily harm to the baby at the Jorgensen family home in Cricklewood, north-west London. Caroline died at Great Ormond Street Hospital for sick children on Tuesday night. It is understood a post mortem examination failed to determine the cause of death.

New rights on faulty goods

IMPROVED rights for consumers to have faulty goods repaired or replaced during the first year after purchase were agreed by European consumer affairs ministers meeting in Luxembourg yesterday. The code, expected to take about a year to come into force, will give customers the same rights across the European Union and rights will also apply to second-hand goods.

Britain claimed credit for the code, although it has been in the EU pipeline for several years. Consumers will have a two-year guarantee on new purchases from commercial operators and one year for second-hand goods, with a right of repair, replacement or at least a partial refund. — Stephen Bates

Calais seamen's strike over

CROSS-CHANNEL ferry traffic was back to normal last night after the French seamen's strike which closed the port of Calais for the third time in six months was called off earlier yesterday. The two-day strike ended after an agreement between the unions and the ferry company SeaFrance. The wildcat stoppage erupted when a seaman had his licence withdrawn following his conviction for drug-trafficking.

An isolated incident became the reason for a larger dispute about pay and conditions which affected thousands of British truckers and motorists who had been waiting at Dover, or who decided to divert to other ferry ports or take the shuttle through the Channel Tunnel to avoid a long wait. — Keith Harper

Freak lobster goes on show

A FISHERMAN who found an extremely rare three-clawed lobster as he collected his catch has given the freak of nature to a sea life centre at Weymouth, Dorset. Chris Mowlem, 50, of Poole, said: "I've been fishing for 15 years and I have never seen anything like it before." The centre's senior aquarist Darren Trent said: "It's a bit like a human being born with two hands on one arm. It's probably just a biological freak but very unusual."

Widow attacks muddle over murder

Jon Henley on anger provoked by the response of the French authorities to killing of tourist

SIX months ago, a 54-year-old toolmaker from Swanley in Kent was knocked over and kicked in the head on the Champs Elysées by a group of rollerblading youths. He died two days later of head injuries without ever recovering consciousness.

Today, his wife, Eve, is no closer to knowing who his killers were. The French police have no leads. An appeal for witnesses was finally launched this week, almost certainly too late to reach the throng of tourists and suburbanites who packed Paris's most famous avenue on that October night.

To a list of 27 unsolved killings of Britons in France over the past 20 years is now added the name of Rodney Henderson.

His widow Eve said from her home yesterday: "I am astonished at the laxity of the French system. I can't believe the examining magistrate admits there are gangs operating on the Champs Elysées and no one knows who they are. I can't believe no one informs me of what's going on. I am astonished the Foreign Office can't do more. There are so many things that seem so wrong."

Rodney and Eve Henderson arrived in Paris on the Euro-

star on October 24. With them were their children, Scott and Nicola, Scott's girlfriend, now wife, Jenny, and Nicola's husband, Andrew.

The next morning they were up early for the lights — the Eiffel Tower, the statue above the Pont de l'Alma underpass that has become a memorial to Princess Diana, an evening cruise on the Seine.

"Someone suggested the Champs Elysées by night," Mrs Henderson said. "We had a quick drink in a café, then queued for a taxi. The three women got in the first one that came; the men were going to follow."

No taxi came. Rodney, Scott and Andrew went for another drink in the nearby Café de la Paix. There was a brief altercation over the bill when it was time to leave. Outside, Andrew heard a

sound and turned to see Scott hit by a group of two or three youths before he himself was surrounded by three others. He was knocked to the floor by a kick to the leg. Andrew struggled to his feet to see his father-in-law slumping to the ground.

"He was kicked in the face," Mrs Henderson said. "Between the eyes, by someone with a skate on. Andrew saw it."

The porter at the Café de la Paix, some 30 yards away, standing chatting with a friend, saw several people fleeing the scene. He has been interviewed by police once; the friend has not been questioned.

The emergency services arrived. While Scott and Andrew insist they made it clear, in broken French, that this was an assault, police were not called.

Then Mrs Henderson's nightmare began. An initial attempt to report the incident to police headquarters was rebuffed; under French law, that has to be done at the station nearest to the scene. Later on Sunday she learned that Roderick had been transferred to intensive care; his brain was damaged and there was severe internal bleeding.

On Monday she found the right police station. "The senior officer was well, very rude," she said. "It was a civil matter, nothing to do with them." On the Tuesday evening, with her approval, her husband's life support machine was switched off.

Finally convinced, Paris police launched a homicide inquiry headed by investigating magistrate Olivier Deparis. Mrs Henderson hired two

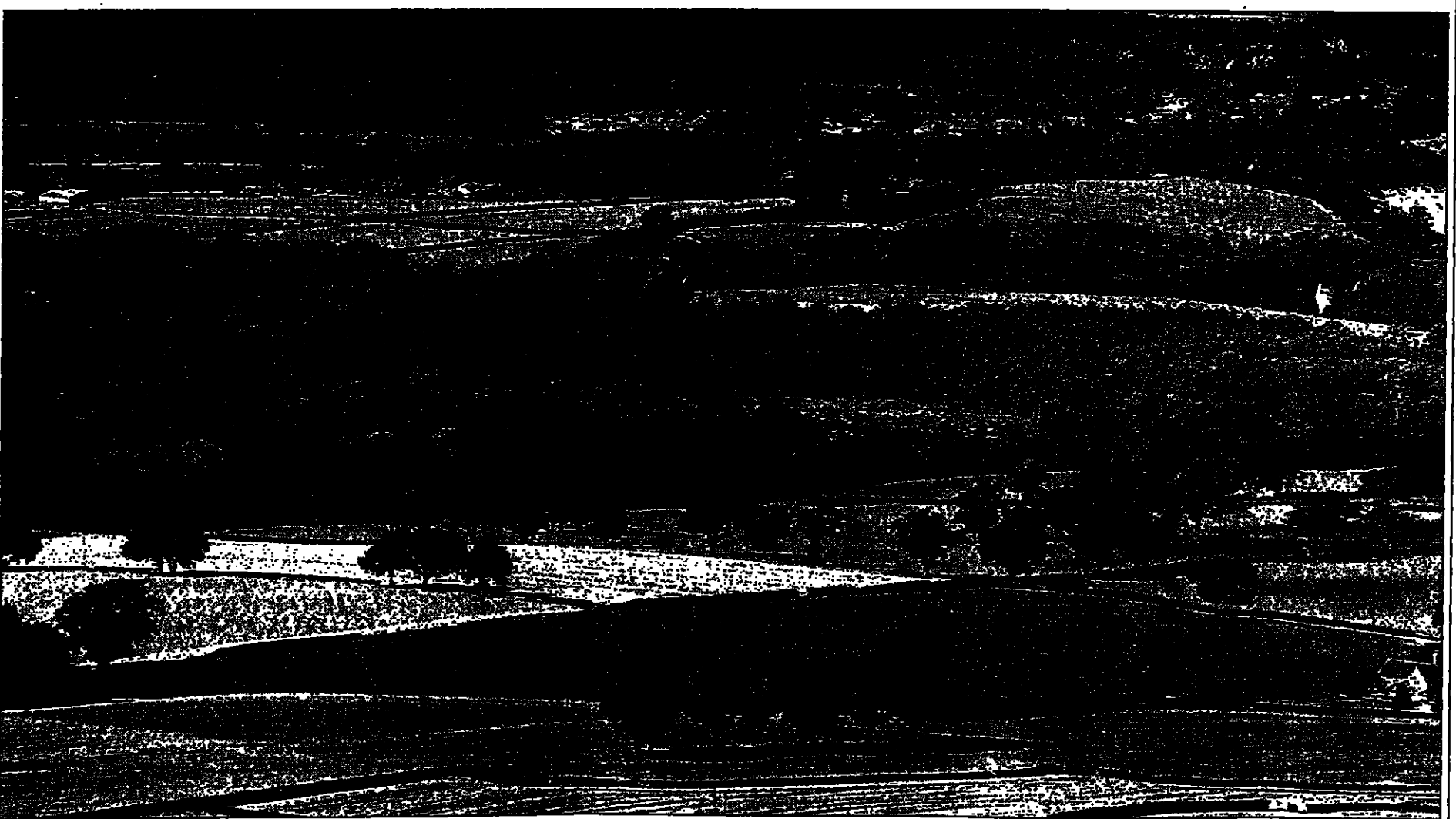
French lawyers, Juliette Boyer-Chamnard and Arthur Vercken, who spent two months persuading police to issue an appeal for witnesses. This finally appeared on Christmas Eve and was full of errors.

In February, the lawyers wrote a formal letter to the examining magistrate demanding action. This week, a new, accurate appeal for witnesses, with a hotline number, appeared.

Ms Boyer-Chamnard yesterday said she had been surprised to learn that a waiter from the Café de la Paix had called the hotline this week. "One might have thought the police would already have interviewed everyone working there that night."

Judge Deparis's office and Paris police spokesmen declined yesterday to comment on the case.

Countryside under pressure



Housing sprawls in the distance across fields near Midhurst, West Sussex, which lies in largely unspoilt countryside near the South Downs

PHOTOGRAPH ANDREW TESTA

National park snub to Downs and New Forest

Owen Bowcott on a missed opportunity to preserve two threatened English landscapes

NEITHER the New Forest nor the South Downs need to be granted national park status but both deserve greater legal protection from encroaching developers, the Countryside Commission announced yesterday.

Its recommendation, likely to be agreed by ministers, will be a bitter disappointment for groups which have been lobbying for both areas to be ranked alongside wildernesses such as Snowdonia and

Dartmoor. The South Downs was on the original list of areas to be designated a national park in 1947 but was left off the final schedule.

Explaining its decision yesterday, the Countryside Commission said that the maze of ancient laws governing grazing rights in the New Forest made it impractical to use national park legislation. The area should, however, be given a special authority status through legislation which would "deliver what is

needed for the forest". The South Downs, which stretches for 106 miles from Moors, Dartmoor, Exmoor, Brecon Beacons, Pembrokeshire Coast and Snowdonia — the commission has proposed strengthening the powers of the less prestigious Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs).

Responding to the commission's decisions, the Liberal Democrats' environment spokesman, Matthew Taylor, said: "This is a real surprise for the New Forest. People confidently expected that it would be granted National Park status. For the South Downs, there should be at least a clear strategy."

"Labour's commitment to

protect the countryside is beginning to look a bit ropey. The protection given to national parks is very strong and there must be a suspicion that they are stopping short of that level of protection."

The 'national park route does not lend itself to long, thin landscapes'

Earlier this week the mountaineer Chris Bonington came out in support of the campaign to make the South Downs a national park. "The Countryside

Commission should seize this historic opportunity to recommend the creation of a new national park in one of England's most popular and beautiful areas of the countryside," he said.

"Both areas are widely considered to merit National Park status, and the protection and resources this brings with it."

The Countryside Commission has not created any national parks since 1957. The New Forest, which has herds of deer roaming across its sandy heaths and woodland, has come under intense development and tourism pressures in recent years. New housing estates on the edge of Bournemouth have encroached on its landscape.

TV revival for comedy duo

COMEDIANS Vic Reeves and Bob Mortimer (above) are lined up to take the lead roles in a revival of cult comedy detective show Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased). Reeves would play a ghost in the show — about two partners in a private detection agency — after his character was murdered in a hit and run incident. Fast Show star Charlie Higson has been signed up to write and produce the series, which Reeves and Mortimer will make for BBC1 if happy with the scripts. It would be seen next year, 30 years after the original series started.

Caroline Chigwell, agent for Reeves and Mortimer, said: "They are keen to do it and they were very big fans of the original series." The BBC has asked Working Title TV, a division of the film company which produced Four Weddings And A Funeral, to make six 50-minute shows.

Cash boost for 'ailing' schools

John Carvel
Education Editor

THE Government yesterday doubled the funding for education action zones, opening the way for better incentives to attract the ablest teachers to attract to schools in some of England's most deprived areas.

David Blunkett, the Education and Employment Secretary, said each zone would get a cash bonus of £1 million instead of the £500,000 promised last year. Business sponsors will continue to provide £250,000, but the Treasury contribution will be increased from £250,000 to £750,000.

The first 12 zones will start in September and another 13 will be launched in January, each including two or three secondary schools and about 18 feeder primaries. Sixty areas have applied for the first wave, the winners due to be announced in June.

Mr Blunkett said there was a wide variety of applications for zone status from partnerships of local authorities, businesses, voluntary groups and parents.

Some proposed strikingly innovative ways of delivering

the school curriculum, while others planned family learning schemes to improve the aspirations and life chances of children.

Under the original policy, zones would have less than 5 per cent above the standard budget and might not have been able to afford many of the elite teachers ministers wanted to attract.

Mr Blunkett said the extra money should also help to spread the zones' extra facilities and expertise. Local authority leaders attacked the zones when the Government said in January that it wanted at least one to be business-led. Graham Lane, Labour education chairman of the Local Government Association, said it could lead to privatisation of state education. Mr Lane's local authority — the London borough of Newham — is now vying for zone funding.

More children are attending independent schools thanks to the strength of the economy, according to the annual census of 1995, the Independent Schools Information Service. There were 478,768 pupils in the 1,308 independent schools affiliated to ISIS, a 1.6 per cent increase on last year.

US talk show denies claims of fake fights

Joanna Coles in New York

TV executives yesterday stood by the Jerry Springer Show, the American talk show where guests are encouraged to attack each other physically, after 16 of the programme's former guests claimed the show's confrontations were fake and all the fights were bogus.

The show, which earlier this year deposed Oprah Winfrey from the number one ratings spot, relies on a combination of public humiliation and violence. But yesterday Mr Springer denied claims on a rival network by more than a dozen guests that they had been coached by producers on how to argue and what to say.

Though the show claims it does not pay guests to appear, some people said they had received more than \$400 and told to act out domestic dramas with people they had never met before.

Diane Dimond, a reporter for Extra, an entertainment show, said she had footage of guests who were encouraged by the producers to wrestle on stage. She said one model called Kelly was told to pretend she had been cheating on her boyfriend.

"We acted everything," one former guest — one of a pair of bodybuilding brothers — told Extra.

Earlier this year, the Guardian revealed some rows relied on cue cards and reported that some guests who screamed at each other on the show were friends.

The accusations come as a double whammy for the show which was dropped from its station, WMAQ in Chicago, on Wednesday, though the contract still had three years to run. A WMAQ spokesman said viewers had protested about Mr Springer.

An ITV spokeswoman said it did not want to be drawn into the row. "It's an entertaining show and it is enjoyed by two-and-a-half million viewers every day."

Egyptian extravaganza



Verdi's Aida returned to Earl's Court, London, last night, the first of three performances starring Wilhemina Wiggins Fernandez, Dennis O'Neill, Anna Valderrama and Piero Giuliacci, with the Royal Philharmonic under Giuseppe Raffia. PHOTOGRAPH: GRAHAM TURNER

Cold kills sharks destined for aquarium

Jamie Wilson

MARINE biologists at the National Marine Aquarium were last night battling to save the lives of six sharks suffering from hypothermia after they were caught in freezing conditions during a flight from Florida.

Four of the original batch of 10 sharks died after the temperature in their tanks fell to 10C when their plane was

caught in a snowstorm at Amsterdam airport.

The four sandbar sharks, four sand tigers and two nurse sharks spent more than 24 hours travelling from Florida Keys to the aquarium in Plymouth over the Easter weekend.

They were due to be among the star attractions when it opens next month.

Two sandbar sharks died shortly after arriving at the aquarium on April 13. A third

sandbar and a nurse shark have died since.

An aquarium spokesman said: "It's a big blow to everyone. All the guys here fought valiantly to keep them alive."

The remaining sharks — four sand tiger, one nurse and one sandbar — are being cared for on a 24-hour basis. The RSPCA is awaiting the results of post mortem examinations on the dead sharks before it decides whether to take further action.

Newark constituency agent also accused of making false return

Labour MP facing court over election expenses

Anne Perkins
Political Correspondent

FIONA Jones, one of the so-called "Blair Babes", is to be prosecuted over allegations that she knowingly made a false declaration of election expenses incurred in winning her Newark seat from the Tories a year ago.

Mrs Jones snatched the Nottinghamshire seat, overturning an 8,000 Tory majority on a 10 per cent swing, in line with the national trend.

She could, if found guilty, face an unlimited fine and imprisonment, and disqualification from parliament.

Other Labour MP, Mohammed Sarwar, and his agent are still facing charges relating to the general election.

Last night Mrs Jones, a former journalist and briefly celebrated as the last MP to make her maiden speech, said: "We won the Newark seat fairly and squarely. The return, which is a public document, was placed with the returning officer in good faith by the agent."

"In my view, it's an honest reflection of the costs of all campaign activities covered by the Representation of the People Act."

A party spokesman refused



"We won the Newark seat fairly and squarely. The return was placed in good faith by the agent"

Fiona Jones (left)

to comment on the case but said: "We wish to say that Fiona Jones is an excellent constituency MP."

The constituency election agent, Des Whitcher, is also facing charges of making an alleged inaccurate return.

There are strict rules governing how much can be spent during an election, but the amount varies depending on the size and type of constituency. According to the election returns, the Labour campaign cost £8,514.94, £400 under the Newark limit per candidate of £8,910.70.

The Liberal Democrat candidate, Peter Harris, made the

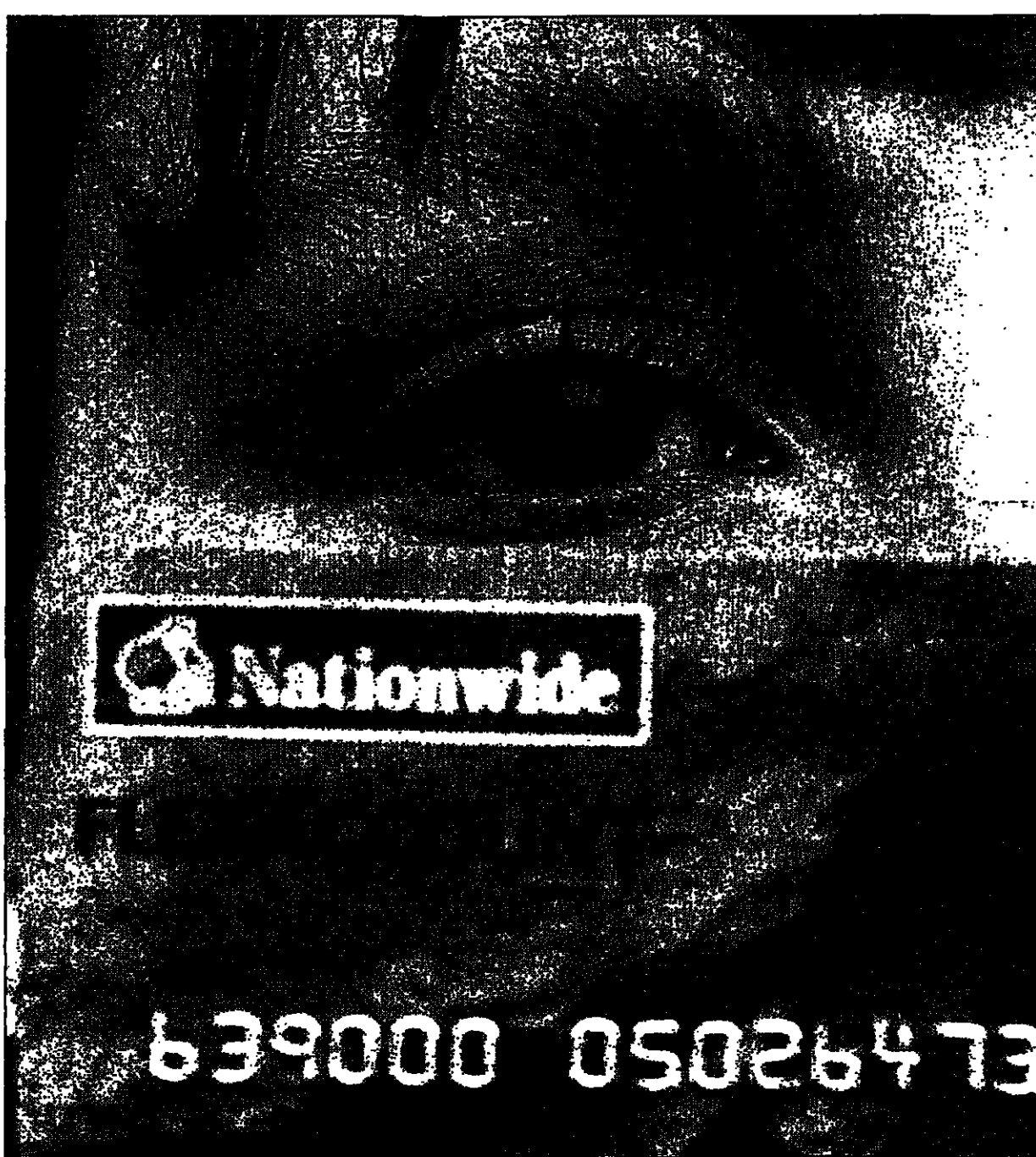
original complaint, claiming that Labour's town centre offices must have cost far more than appeared in returns. Mr Harris claimed to have spent just £4,160 on his campaign, while the defeated Tory Richard Alexander declared expenses of £6,118.

During the campaign Colin MacLeod, a prominent local Tory and then chairman of the Newark firm Caledonian Mining, announced he was backing Labour. Mrs Jones's entry in the Register of Members' Interests declares Caledonian mining contributed "more than 25 per cent" of her election expenses.

Mr MacLeod last night confirmed he had made donations to Labour which, according to Caledonian Mining's accounts, totalled £20,000. But he refused to say whether the cash was given to the Newark party or to the party nationally. "It's nothing to do with anybody what I give to the Labour Party," he said.

Labour headquarters in London could not say whether the money had been received in 1997, although a spokesman denied any significant donation. Caledonian Mining had previously been a significant corporate donor to the Conservative Party.

Vision of the future



Photos of customers' eyes are the key element in the cashcard scheme being tried out at Swindon. PHOTOGRAPH: SEAN SMITH

Eyes have it as safer way to draw cash

Building society tries out dispensers that do away with PIN numbers

Rory Carroll

THE world's first cash machine that responds to the blink of an eye instead of a PIN number was unveiled yesterday in Britain's unsung cockpit of social revolution: Swindon.

Nationwide Building Society customers queued up for a pioneering squirt into a camera that scanned eyeballs and read the patterns of each iris.

Money whizzed out once the scan matched the details of the customer's eyes, which were recorded on the card.

The technology could make keys and plastic cash cards obsolete and deter muggers from trying to find out PIN numbers.

The six-month public trial will lead to the system being introduced across the country if customers respond enthusiastically.

The system works by digitally encoding the eye after

A pioneer town

Attracted Neolithic settlers 30,000 years ago. Iron Age descendants built the first hill forts.

Provided a key road junction for Roman troops.

Gave early taste of voter apathy in 13th century when, given right to send a member to parliament, it did not bother.

Anticipated Thatcherism in the 17th century by taking over the market trade of its plague-afflicted rival, Highworth.

Housed the Great Western Railway's Medical Fund Society, a 19th century health service cited as a model for the NHS.

Produced the classic blonde dolly, Diana Dors. Followed up with Melinda Messenger.

Led Britain into the computer age with Europe's first semi-conductor plant.

First town to appoint a screenwriter in residence and set up a municipally funded arts centre.

reading the 250 different features of the iris. The chance of two people having the same iris are more than one in a billion.

The eyeprint, a human barcode, is checked against the one stored on the computer database, a process quicker than keying in a four-digit PIN code. The technology cannot identify people wearing mirror sunglasses or novelty contact lenses. Anyone under 4ft 9in or over 6ft 5in in height will be outside the range of the camera.

"Marvellous, really mar-

vellous," said Albert White, 81, after pocketing some notes in the glare of four TV crews.

"You just put in your card, press two buttons, and you're done. I didn't have to remember my PIN number."

Emboldened, other customers at the Nationwide head office volunteered to get their irises — the coloured part of their eye — photographed and stored.

No light or laser beam needs to be shined. Customers' main (and groundless) concern is that the process might hurt. "Either that or

they worry about that film where Arnold Schwarzenegger rips off someone's head and holds it up to a camera to open a door," said the Nationwide photographer.

A decisive incentive for customers could be the desire to prevent family members borrowing their cash card for shopping sprees.

John Daugman, the mathematician from the Computer Laboratory at Cambridge university who invented the system, said: "Security systems that rely on secret knowledge or private possessions can fall into the wrong hands."

"The iris recognition system does away with this problem and can be applied to all areas currently using cards, keys, passwords or PIN numbers."

The Blade Runner-style device is Swindon's latest foray into technological innovation. Since its railway-building economy collapsed in the 1950s, the town leapt into electronics, attracting more hi-tech firms than any other British firm and turning the M4 into a silicon corridor.

Though derided by some residents as an aesthetic blot on the landscape, Swindon has been claimed by local politicians as the touchstone of technological change in Britain.

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Jews honour Holocaust victims

Out of the ashes of despair

Neil Bowdler on the 'march of the living' at Auschwitz



Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu (left) leads yesterday's Holocaust Remembrance Day march from Auschwitz concentration camp (right) to the Birkenau death camp



OUT of the ashes of the Holocaust sprang Israel, the rabbi said. To illustrate the point, a skull-capped youth perched on the ruins of a gas chamber proudly brandished the Israeli flag in the crosswind.

A crowd of 7,000 had walked the mile or so from the Auschwitz concentration camp to the death camp of Birkenau — the route taken by many of those who were then executed by the Nazis. It was the largest

gathering yet in the 10-year history of the "march of the living" to recall the six million Jewish victims of the Holocaust.

The aim of the procession is to let young people hear firsthand from death-camp survivors the horrors of the Holocaust in the place where it happened, so future generations may better remember.

The marchers were led by the Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, who used this year's event to

launch the 50th anniversary of Israel's foundation. The clearest message yesterday was one of power and nation-building.

"We know that Jewish sovereignty and Jewish power are the only deterrents and the only guarantees against the slaughter of Jews," Mr Netanyahu said, surveying a mass of flags in Israel's blue and white national colours.

"Only the Jewish state can protect the Jewish people and you can make the Jewish

state as strong as it must be by joining the state of Israel," Israel's chief rabbi, Meir Lau, struck a similar note.

"The only revenge that we can offer [for the Holocaust] is our continuity, our immortality."

"We invite you to come and join us and be together in the homeland, the state of Israel."

The march had begun under the Auschwitz gate three hours earlier with a call to order from the shofar, a ram's horn used by Jews in

religious ceremonies and as an ancient battle-signal.

Earlier, young people from 45 countries had milled around a car park waiting for the march to begin. They

coped in a variety of ways with the killing fields of their ancestors. Some, genuinely

indifferent, hid behind sunglasses and put on cigarettes.

Others hugged each other in anticipation of tears. One bespectacled boy with an eye for symbolism draped himself in an Israeli flag and

clung to the barbed-wire perimeter fence as schoolgirls took snapshots.

On the margins a group of Catholic Poles, "the friends of Israel," arrived to show their solidarity. "The Madonna and Christ were after all both Jews," said one woman, racing forward to take her place among the marchers.

Invited Jewish and Polish dignitaries led the march, followed by survivors who shuffled along the tarmac, some clutching the hands of loved

ones, others using walking sticks to trace their memories on the landscape.

"Look at all those train tracks, now you can see why they chose this place," said Jakob Handl as he crossed a railway bridge to join a cluster of relatives. "They built it at a major rail junction."

Happy to parade his concentration camp number to photographers, he declared: "A good German is a dead German."

Singing or humming peace songs and Jewish laments, the young people behind them gave varying rationales for their participation.

For David Goldberg, a Canadian 16-year-old, it is about paying homage to the family dead whose names he had inscribed on a plaque he planned to bury in Birkenau soil. For Roy Kass, an Israeli aged 16, it is about returning to the roots of the Jewish nation where he thinks all the world's Jewish communities rightly belong.

France denies it thwarted arrest of Karadzic

Jon Henley in Paris

THE French defence ministry yesterday denied claims that secret meetings between one of its army officers and Radovan Karadzic, the former Bosnian Serb leader, in effect prevented Nato capturing the most-

wanted war crimes suspect still at large in the former Yugoslavia.

A ministry spokesman, Pierre Bayle, admitted that Major Hervé Gourmelon had regular contact with Mr Karadzic while stationed in Bosnia, but said he was recalled to Paris as soon as the relationship "became questionable".

Mr Karadzic is indicted by the United Nations war crimes tribunal at The Hague on two counts of genocide.

The Washington Post has reported that US and allied military leaders called off a plan to capture Mr Karadzic last summer after they learned that a French officer had held secret meetings with him at which details of the plan could have been revealed.

Citing unnamed US military and diplomatic sources, the paper identified the officer as Maj Gourmelon, the French army's chief liaison officer to the Serbs in his sector of Bosnia. It said the incident had left US officials "wary of trusting the French to co-operate" in any future undercover operation to capture the increasingly isolated Mr Karadzic.

The defence ministry vigorously rejected the claim, saying in a statement that it "considers that the action of this officer did not at all compromise the arrest of Radovan Karadzic" and that it "categorically denies allegations calling into question the performance of the group of French soldiers in Bosnia".

Late last year, the chief prosecutor at The Hague, Louise Arbour, accused the French military of failing to co-operate with the tribunal and preventing officers testifying, although that row appears to have been resolved. "War criminals in Bosnia feel completely safe in the French sector," she said at the time.

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Dutroux escape revives the horror

Suspensions of official collusion with the alleged paedophile will not go away, writes Stephen Bates in Brussels

BELGIUM was convulsed last night by the seeming ease with which Marc Dutroux, the country's most reviled and notorious criminal, had escaped from police custody.

It was the latest shock to the Belgian criminal justice system which has been rocked repeatedly by the slight, moustached figure of Mr Dutroux — a man convicted in the minds of most Belgians, if not yet by their courts, of some of the most shocking crimes the country has had to contend with. He is routinely described by newspapers as a monster.

The fact that he could escape by pushing over a single gatepost in a neighbourhood court in the countryside revived Belgians' worst fears.

Mr Dutroux, aged 41, a builder from Charleroi, is still awaiting trial nearly two years after his arrest on charges of killing four girls and abducting three more. His trial and that of his associates is not expected until the end of this year.

Within minutes of his escape, lawyers acting for the families of his victims it must have involved official collusion: "If he escaped, it

must be because he knew where he could get help," one said.

But the likelihood explanation may be worse: his escape was helped by the police incompetence that has dogged the case from day one and caused Belgians to question as never before how their criminal justice system works.

Mr Dutroux sprang to notoriety in August 1996 when he was arrested after his

back garden. He also identified an associate with whom he had fallen out. The two girls had apparently starved to death while locked in the cell the previous Christmas while Mr Dutroux had been in prison for four months on unrelated offences.

Later, two other girls, both teenagers who had disappeared in 1995, were found buried under a shed on another of his properties.

Public outrage was so great that 300,000 Belgians took to the streets of Brussels in October 1996 in an orderly demonstration demanding changes to the criminal justice system. But so far reforms promised by the flustered coalition government of Jean-Luc Dehaene have become bogged down in political wrangles.

Belgian police and magistrates are badly paid and badly trained, and many owe advancement to political patronage. The system is resistant to reform and sustained pressure for change is lacking.

Last night Marc Verwilghem, the parliamentarian who led one of the inquiries, said: "This time those in authority will have to accept responsibility."

even had the house under surveillance.

So incompetent was the police search that many Belgians believe Mr Dutroux must have had protection, certainly for one of his sidelines, car theft.

Two parliamentary inquiries have failed to find any evidence of this. But they have castigated the police and magistracy for a catalogue of blunders in their inquiries into child disappearances. So far none of the officers named as incompetent has been disciplined.

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Police searched his house three times and heard children's cries, but failed to find them, and so to save the girls' lives

van had been spotted near the site where a teenage girl had been abducted. After hours of interrogation he told the police that he would "give" them two girls. He led them to a concealed cell in his basement where they were held. Dutroux then showed police where he had buried the bodies of two other girls, aged eight, in his

A number of alleged associates, including his wife, a teacher who reportedly said she had been too frightened to feed the girls in his absence — have also been arrested and charged.

What horrified the public was the disclosure that police had searched his house three times and even heard children's cries, but had failed to find them, and so to save the girls' lives. The authorities had been given warnings about his activities for years and had

Shortages hit Serbian shoppers

Even milk is scarce in Belgrade since the devaluation of the dinar, reports Karen Coleman

THIS disorganised shelves of the state-run shop display a range of products, from packets of pepper to luxury imported chocolates. But the fridge is empty of milk. It sold out early in the morning.

For more than a fortnight there have been milk shortages in Belgrade shops. Producers have cut down their supplies as they wait for the price to be increased. Panic buying and fear of further cut-backs have left many customers without milk.

"I am busy, and when I leave my job there is no milk," said Svetlana Borovcanin, a lawyer and mother of three. "It's only there early in the morning, and you only get it in the evening if you are lucky."

Sugar, cooking oil and diesel oil are also becoming harder to find, thanks to the devaluation of the Serbian dinar. In an effort to stabilise the economy and stamp out illegal trading in foreign currency, the government reduced the value of the dinar on April 1.

Today a German mark is worth six dinars. Before, the official rate was 3.3. But the black-market dealers who can be found on any street corner

in Belgrade give a much higher rate, creating a dual financial system which the authorities are trying to eradicate.

The devaluation sent prices soaring in restaurants, petrol stations and shops. Overnight, people were paying 10-20 per cent more for imported goods: cigarettes, fuel and alcohol. But most salaries stayed the same.

People began to fear that the country was returning to the dark days of 1993 and 1994, when hyperinflation caused huge financial problems and severe shortages. In Serbia, war-imposed sanctions stifled industry and left the country in chaos.

An outer wall of sanctions still exists, preventing Yugoslavia from joining key financial and other international institutions. Western investors are slow to sink their money in the still politically unstable country.

The unemployment rate is 40 per cent and the average income €120 a month, according to Danica Popovic, a professor at the Belgrade School of Economics. "The economy is falling after a decline of some 65 per cent in industrial output since 1991," she said. "With our rate of unemployment, you have very unhappy people."

The lack of investment and continued embargoes have affected industries all over the country. The Pk Zemun state-run dairy farm, 12 miles from Belgrade, used to have a computerised milking system that increased productivity.

But the sanctions have prevented computer parts being imported.

Belgrade taxi drivers have been on strike in protest at low earnings. Many of them drive clapped-out cars that spew black fumes. Zeljko Kraljevic, president of the Beo-Taxi Association, said drivers now worked twice as hard to get the income they earned three years ago.

Pensioners are badly hit, too: 90 per cent of them do not get enough to cover their minimum expenses.

The crisis in the southern province of Kosovo is also hampering economic growth. Foreign leaders are threatening to impose stiffer sanctions on Yugoslavia if the Serbs and ethnic Albanians do not start a working dialogue soon.

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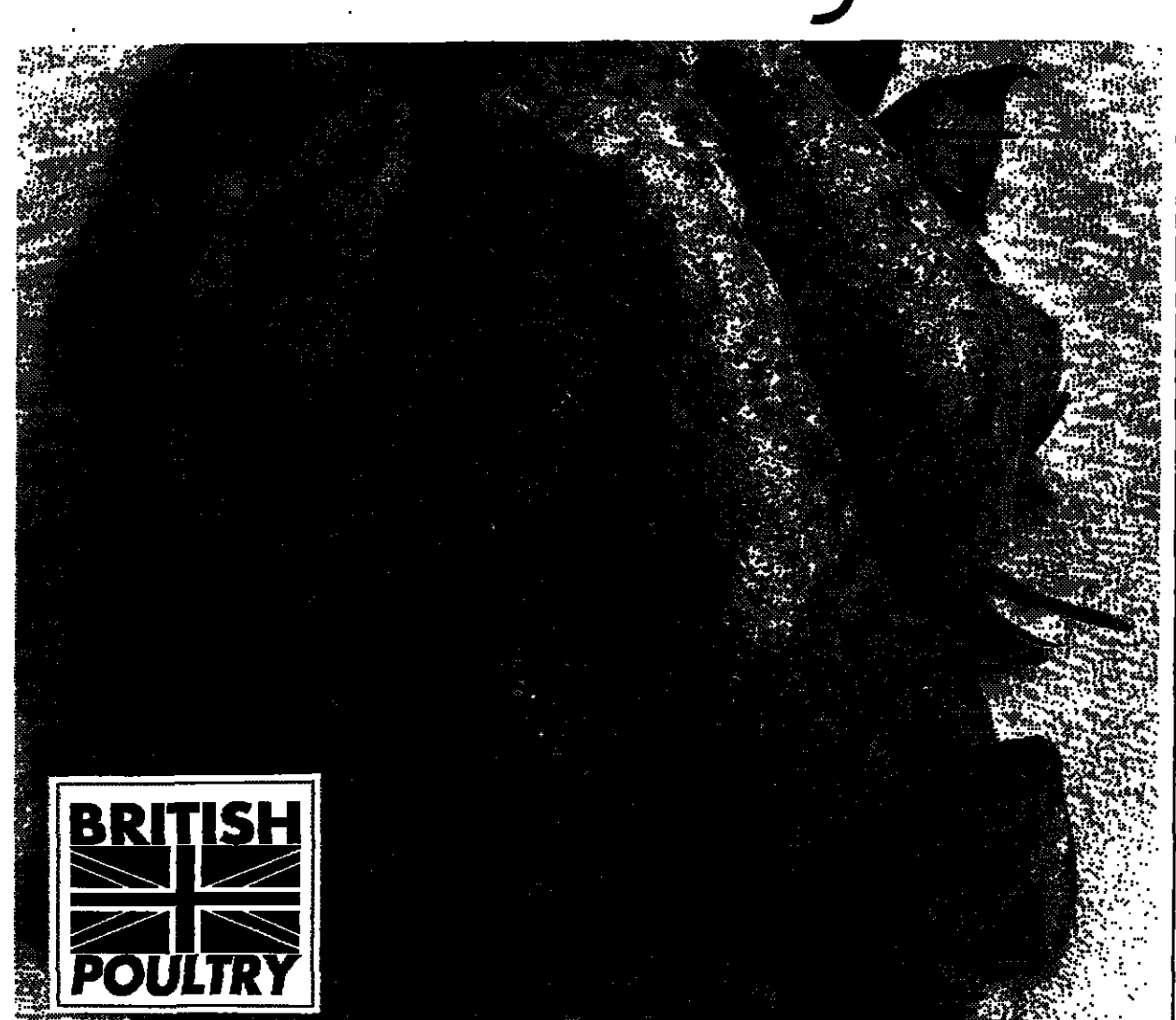
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Washington presses European Union to tighten controls on sales to 'the bad guys'

US bans gun sales to UK

Richard Norton-Taylor

THE United States has told Britain it will cancel all pending licences for the export of American small arms to British companies as a first step towards stopping the supply of US guns to the European Union.

It is understood that outstanding licences for US firearms exports to Britain cover more than 14,000 guns. Washington has warned that no new licences will be issued until EU governments tighten controls to guarantee that the weapons are not re-

exported "to the bad guys", a senior US official told the New York Times. American firearms sold to European companies have ended up in the hands of terrorists and organised criminal gangs, as well as in war zones in former Yugoslavia, Turkey and central Africa, according to US and European law-enforcement officials attending the annual meeting of the United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in Vienna.

The irony of the United States, which has limited firearms controls, stopping trade to Britain, which now has the strictest, was not lost on British officials. And the Foreign Office insisted yesterday that Britain "will not licence for export equipment which might be used for international aggression or internal repression".

But the US move was taken the day Oxfam published a report that said Britain's small arms and ammunition exports were still ending up "in the wrong hands", despite a government pledge not to sell weapons to countries with poor human rights records. Between 1995 and 1997, the aid agency said, Britain exported small weapons to more than 100 countries, including many riven by political unrest or involved in violent conflicts.

Oxfam called on EU governments to set up a "fully accountable, open reporting" system for exports of small arms. If the British government was serious about an ethical foreign policy, it should no longer allow the Department of Trade and Industry to be responsible for licensing, promoting, and controlling arms sales, it said. The Government should set up a single arms control agency.

The DTI yesterday said that what the US decided was a matter for the US. But the Foreign Office said Britain was working with Washington to draw up a statement of principles and an action plan, to combat firearms trafficking, at a meeting next month of the G8 group of industrialised countries in Birmingham.

For the Clinton administration, the model for international controls is a treaty signed in November by the US and other members of the Organisation of American States. US sources said controls had been agreed by officials from G8 countries, leaving the heads of government to endorse them formally at the Birmingham meeting. Although the regulations would restrict just eight countries, they include the five largest arms-producing nations, which account for 80 per cent of exports.

Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, said Britain was also sponsoring a conference in South Africa to seek practical ways to curb the trade and was supporting the Malian initiative for a west African moratorium on the trade and manufacture of light arms.



'Harassed' Kenyan hawkers clash with riot police in Nairobi

KENYAN riot police fired and chubbied and wounded at least one protester (above) as they tried to break up a violent protest by hawkers and minibuses drivers in Nairobi yesterday.

Hundreds of the protesters disrupted rush hour traffic to draw attention to alleged police and city council harassment. They blocked roads and lit fires in the city centre early yesterday.

They claimed dozens of unlicensed drivers who compete for fares with the city's minibuses were arrested on Wednesday and unfairly accused of robbery. The local council is also accused of systematically harassing the often unlicensed hawkers who sell anything from watches to handkerchiefs on the streets.

By mid-morning traffic had returned to normal in the city centre, although most shops and businesses remained closed in the city centre. On Wednesday, newspapers said the city council had banned hawking in the business district in an effort to combat lawlessness. — Reuters.

California faces diesel curbs

A POWERFUL anti-pollution authority in California is considering new curbs on diesel fumes that could cause fundamental changes in its economy, the world's seventh biggest.

In a defeat for the state's chamber of commerce and the trucking industry, a scientific review board identified diesel fumes as a major carcinogen and urged the Air Resources Board to act quickly to protect public health. The scientists reported that people in the Los Angeles basin breathe the worst fumes — 60 per cent above the average risk level — and that 14,850 Californians could die of cancer caused by the fumes.

The board has pioneered a ban or limitations on thousands of products linked to cancer and other diseases. These range from furniture glue to carpet cleaners, as well as vehicle exhaust emissions. Critics fear the board could be taking the first steps towards banning diesel. — Christopher Reed, Los Angeles.

Extortion cop's suicide bid

A TOP Italian policeman who faces a humiliating trial on extortion charges was last night recovering in hospital after trying to kill himself by smashing his head repeatedly against the wall of his prison cell.

General Francesco Delfino of the paramilitary carabinieri was arrested earlier this month and accused of wringing \$350,000 from the family of a kidnapper victim whom he had known since he was a junior officer. — John Hooper, Rome.

Turks call early election

TURKEY'S prime minister, Mesut Yilmaz, and the opposition power-broker Deniz Baykal yesterday agreed to hold early elections next March. "There will be both local and general elections in March 1999," Mr Baykal said after meeting Mr Yilmaz.

Mr Baykal said they had also agreed to form a pre-election government after parliament returns from its summer recess in October. He said his leftwing party might join the new administration, which will be headed by an independent prime minister. Elections are not officially due until 2000. — Reuters, Ankara.

Burundi attack kills 76

HUTU rebels in Burundi killed 29 civilians in an attack east of the capital, Bujumbura, the army said yesterday. Lieutenant-Colonel Isale Nibizi said the deaths occurred in dawn attacks in Isale commune. Troops from the Tutsi-dominated army had intervened and killed 47 rebels, he added.

Meanwhile Bent Nielsen, a Danish aid worker, was killed late on Wednesday in an apparent car-jacking attempt in Bujumbura, aid officials said. — Reuters, Bujumbura.

Nasty name backfires

A RACEHORSE in New Zealand was abruptly withdrawn from a race in Wellington after the authorities discovered that her name, spelt backwards, could cause offence, the Evening Post reported yesterday.

Tulsi Tsan was renamed Ben Again and returned to the track on Tuesday. — Reuters, Wellington.

Martin Luther King's 'assassin' dies

AP in Nashville



JAMES Earl Ray, the petty criminal who conspired to assassinate Martin Luther King Jr, then recanted and spent decades seeking a trial, died yesterday, Tennessee state officials said. He was aged 70.

By pleading guilty in 1969 Ray avoided the possibility of a conviction at trial and a death sentence. He then argued for years that he was coerced into making the plea.

His attempt to get a trial drew support from an unlikely coalition that included his own family and King's, as well as civil rights leaders who believed King was the victim of a conspiracy, not a lone man. Shortly after Ray pleaded guilty, Coretta Scott King, the slain civil rights leader's wife, said there had been "many fingers which helped pull the trigger."

Arguing for a trial recently, she said: "Even if no new light is shed on the facts concerning my husband's assassination, at least we and the nation can have the satisfaction of knowing that justice has run its course in this tragedy."

The Rev Joseph Lowery, a co-founder of King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference, said he never believed Ray was smart enough to plan the assassination alone.

Dexter King, one of the slain civil rights leader's four children, met with Ray in prison in 1997 and said he no longer believed Ray killed his father.

Brazil's Cardoso hit by death of friends

There are fears that the loss of two key supporters of reform will hold up vital legislation, reports Alex Bellos in Sao Paulo

THE Brazilian government, still reeling from the death last weekend of President Fernando Henrique Cardoso's closest political friend, has been dealt a further blow with the sudden death of a second ally.

Luis Eduardo Magalhaes, the government's leader in the lower house and the marshal of an ambitious reform programme, died of a heart attack on Tuesday night. He was 43.

Two days earlier the communications minister, Sergio Motta, the most powerful reform voice in the cabinet, died from a chronic lung ailment. He was 57.

The fallout from the deaths will paralyse congress for weeks and threaten to expose Latin America's biggest economy to the threat of an Asian-style currency crisis by delaying key legislation. Traditionally, political activity in Brazil winds down for the World Cup football tournament in June. In July campaigning starts for the general election in October.

"It is hard to imagine anything worse for Cardoso. It is undeniable that Magalhaes' death is a threat to the government's reforms," the analyst Leon de Martins Rodrigues said.

Sergio Motta, aged 57, was nicknamed the "tractor" because he was credited with being the engine of the government's reforms, holding together the five-party coalition with tough leadership. He used his close friendship with Mr Cardoso — they were both leftwing activists in the 1970s — to act as the president's go-between with an often difficult congress.

Magalhaes, who smoked two packs of cigarettes a day and suffered from high blood pressure, was a leader of a rightwing party in the coalition and was often referred to by the media as "Mr

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Philippines prepares for election

Millions starving as El Niño effect hits Mindanao

Claire Wallerstein
in Mindanao

DESPERATE farmers in the southern Philippines who have been stricken by a drought induced by El Niño are resorting to eating poisonous plants and selling their children.

Meanwhile the country's government is lavishing funds on the election campaign instead of emergency food rations, critics claim.

According to the Red Cross, at least 2 million people in Mindanao and a further 175,000 on the island of Cebu are in dire need of food because of the drought which has been ravaging the south for almost a year.

Rice harvests in the worst-hit areas are down by 90 per cent, and rainfall last month was just 2mm against the usual 138mm. Families who planted drought-resistant crops such as cassava have had even this emergency food

destroyed by starving rats. Up to 40 people are reported to have died of food poisoning and scores more have been hospitalised after eating *lagos*, or wild yams. If not prepared properly, the yams can cause respiratory paralysis.

The victims, mostly indigenous mountain tribespeople, have been unable to prepare the yams as they cannot afford to use their dwindling water supplies. One skeletal village chief remarked: "It is better to die on a full stomach than an empty one."

Others have fallen ill after drinking water from stagnant pools or sap from the trunks of banana trees.

In desperation, farmers have sold farm animals and equipment to buy rice — meaning they may have to use their bare hands for ploughing next planting season. Local reports say one couple had sold their children — although they were too ashamed to be identified. Village officials have been



A group of children in Mindanao wait for the distribution of relief food by the government

PHOTOGRAPH: PAT ROQUE

calling for an increased police presence in the area as crime, especially food theft, has soared. Damiano Callino, a councillor in Buot Taup, 10

miles west of Cebu City, said: "Life here is miserable. We cannot just arrest those who steal the crops. They do it because there is nothing left to eat."

After repeatedly denying there was a food crisis, the government finally took action in late March after farmers threatened to overrun warehouses stocked

with rice which they could no longer afford to buy. Emergency supplies of rice are now on their way from China, Vietnam and Thailand.

Candidates square up for farce

Adam Easton in Manila

LESS than a month before Filipinos go to the polls to elect a new president, the candidates seem happier challenging each other to boxing matches than unseating their stricken economy. A leading political scientist at the University of the Philippines, Alex Magno, describes the campaign as probably the worst in the country's history.

"There have been no policy debates. It's extraordinary," he said.

A major stumbling block, according to Mr Magno, is the leading candidate, Joseph "Erap" Estrada, the current vice-president. The portly former movie idol and college drop-out admits his knowledge of economics is minimal. His love of good food, expensive whisky and catnapping during government debates is well-known. Mr Estrada regularly gets twice the approval rating of his rivals in opinion polls.

"With Erap dominating, the campaign has turned into a farce," Mr Magno said. The ruling party, Lakas, which backs the former speaker of the House of Representatives, Jose de Venecia, has begun a desperate search for Mr Estrada's Achilles heel. It focused first on health and fitness. Mr de Venecia took a treadmill test and challenged Mr Estrada also to do so to prove his stamina for the post of chief executive. Mr Estrada responded by inviting Mr de Venecia to go 10 rounds with him in the ring.

At this point President Fidel Ramos, himself a fitness fanatic, said boxing was no way to prove anybody's "fitness" for the job. He suggested a scuba diving or mountaineering contest would be better.

Meanwhile, the race's most infamous candidate Imelda Marcos, aged 88, also joined in the fitness race. Limbering up with a spot of disco dancing, the widow of the late dictator added shorts, gym shoes and T-shirt to her customary pearls to take part in a fun run.

Mrs Marcos had earlier grabbed the headlines by crawling on her hands and knees along the aisle of Manila Cathedral and prostrating herself sobbing at the altar.

But lately, events have taken a sinister twist. Mr Estrada has accused the president's aides of plotting to have him killed. He now takes

packed lunches with him on the campaign trail, claiming to know that his enemies plan to poison him with cyanide. "My cooks will have to be more careful," he said.

Not to be outdone, President Ramos claims he is being stalked by a hired gun.

A former Estrada aide and disgraced senior policeman, Reynaldo Berroya, claims the vice-president asked him to have Mr Ramos assassinated back in 1992 so that he could take over at the presidential palace. The pair had become drinking buddies after Mr Berroya had been dispatched to arrest Mr Estrada for his habit of urinating on police officers while drunk.

Police chiefs are also investigating claims that the country's second most wanted



man, Eduardo "Boy Muslim" Iran, has been seen stalking Ramos during the president's sorties into the provinces. This is despite reports that Mr Iran, unheard of for several years, has been paralysed by a stroke. A police spokesman, Sergeant Napoleon de los Santos, said: "A person who is determined to kill the president and is ready to die for that mission can do it even if he is paralysed."

Mr Magno believes a ban on the advertising of election manifestos in the campaign season — intended to benefit poorer candidates — has led to the current pantomime. It also explains why dozens of movie stars, TV personalities and basketball players are running for office. Their famous names give them a greater chance of being elected than better-qualified but lesser-known candidates.

"The masses want to be entertained. The advertising ban means candidates have to make news — and scandal is the best news there is," Mr Magno said.

US fixes talks for Afghan foes

Suzanne Goldenberg
in Islamabad

MEMBERS of Afghanistan's Taliban army have begun to arrive in the Pakistani capital to meet their northern foes for talks arranged by Bill Richardson, the US ambassador to the United Nations.

But the prospect of talks on a ceasefire and exchange of prisoners has been eclipsed by a stand-off between the Taliban and the UN.

On Monday the Taliban, who control more than 80 per cent of Afghanistan, barred the UN's co-ordinator of humanitarian assistance from Afghanistan, further jeopardising aid operations in the rebel-held north and the Taliban's southern stronghold, Kandahar.

"The tragedy is that this is paralysing programmes," said Sarah Russell, a UN spokeswoman in Islamabad. "Basically, we are in limbo."

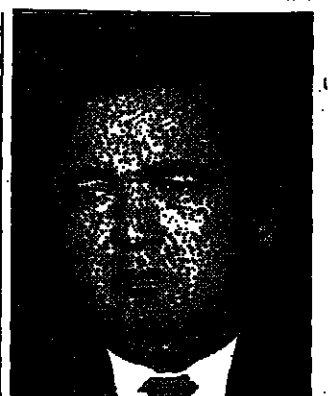
Neither side showed any sign of softening yesterday but diplomats were anxious to play down the row over the UN aid co-ordinator, Alfredo Witschi-Cesari. The Taliban accuse him of "disrespect to national religion, culture and tradition", because he refused to comply with their edict barring non-Afghan Muslim women from working without a male relative in attendance.

Mr Richardson's main achievement during his one-day visit to Kabul and the Shiekhah headquarters of General Abdul Rashid Dostum, military leader of the anti-Taliban forces, was to set a date for the sides to meet.

The talks will be held before April 27 — the 20th anniversary of the communist revolution that set Afghanistan on its road to ruin.

Both sides promised Mr Richardson that they would not launch fresh attacks, but within hours there were reports of fighting in the Ghorband valley, about 35 miles north of Kabul.

The Taliban ambassador to Islamabad, Mullah Abdul Hakim Mujahid, said Kabul



Bill Richardson: He got talks to start by next Monday

would give its opponents until today to stop fighting before it considered retaliation. "At least we will exchange ideas. At least we will come together, so that is a big achievement," the mullah said. "The issue of Afghanistan will not be settled in one day, one month or even one year."

Until the sides meet, however, the focus is on the showdown over Mr Witschi-Cesari. The Taliban see him as a symbol of Western criticism of their human rights abuses.

The stand-off highlights the international community's failure to persuade the Taliban to lift their ban on girls going to school and women working. "The trouble with Afghanistan is the lack of leverage," a diplomat said. "The Americans may be a superpower, but they also have limited leverage over the Taliban."

Privately, aid workers in Afghanistan admit they are hampered in dealing with the Taliban because the UN is confused about balancing international standards of human rights against the sheer need of Afghans.

UN operations in Afghanistan were circumscribed even before the Taliban marched into Kabul in September 1996. But its decision to halt relief operations in the north last autumn, after food aid was looted by anti-Taliban forces, left 200,000 people hungry during a punishing winter.

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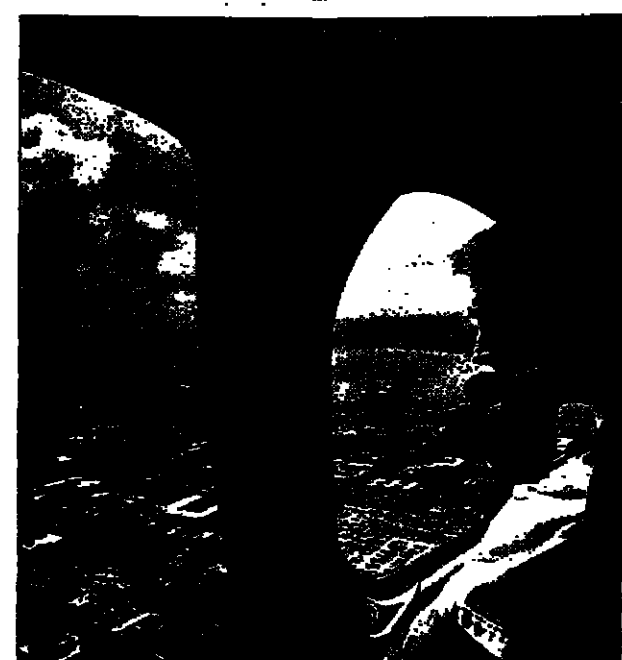
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Analysis The police



Cutting no ice in Kigali 12

Police forces assume that they can draw a blank cheque to meet their spiralling budgets. **Duncan Campbell** questions whether we are getting value for our money

Fair cops, fair costs

IN London, an inquiry into the handling of the investigation of the murder of Stephen Lawrence is under way in Aberdeen, a chief constable is under pressure to resign following serious criticisms of the handling of another murder hunt. In both inquiries, claims of inefficiency have been made. Next month, the Police Federation will gather for its annual conference in Bournemouth when the future financing of — a good moment to ask if we are getting value for money from this segment of the criminal justice system, which now costs £10,480 million a year?

The publication of this week's report which links hard drugs to crime raises again the issue of public spending on all aspects of crime from policing to prosecution to legal aid to probation to jail. Is criminal justice now such a hungry beast that it demands an ever-increasing budget?

When the first audit of police costs was conducted by Sir Patrick Sheehy, then chairman of BAT Industries, at the behest of Kenneth Clarke, in 1992, there was, in some parts of the service, an affronted reaction that a tobacco manufacturer should presume to inspect and criticise the workings of a public service. Resistance to change within the police was enormous and it was asserted that policing was one area where economies could not be made without disastrous consequences.

That attitude has largely changed. There is now a recognition in the ranks that the

police is a service which has to compete with the NHS, education and social services, and will inevitably be subject to public scrutiny and cannot expect automatic budget increases.

The resistance encountered by the Audit Commission when it started examining police practices has also largely evaporated. David Blakey, president of the Association of Chief Police Officers, said recently that police now accepted that they should be judged by at least some of the measurable parts of their performance: clear-up rates, arrest rates per officer, response times to 999 calls, and numbers of officers on the beat. So what, areas should be scrutinised?

To put the police in context, it is necessary to look at the cost of the entire criminal justice system. This has increased in real terms in the last ten years by 63.7 per cent. Within this, police costs are 39 per cent up. The police element appears to compare well with increases in costs for the Crown Prosecution Service (96.1 per cent), Criminal Injuries Compensation (235 per cent) and Legal Aid (137 per cent).

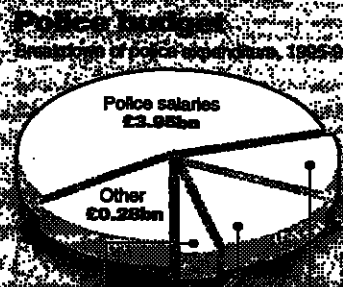
However, the comparisons are in many ways unfair: the CPS increase is mainly because that organisation was not fully operational at the time; compensation has risen dramatically as a result of publicity; the legal aid bill is bigger because there are more prosecutions; prison costs (up 54 per cent) and probation (up 42 per cent) reflect that. But the suspicion that costs have spiralled because ministers feared antagonising the service is not

justified by the figures. Even so, expenditure per head of population (England and Wales) on the police is now £123.10 per year. In 1987/88 the figure was £67.94. Total expenditure on the police stands at £7.21 billion, of which more than half — £3.95 billion — is accounted for by salaries and a further £1.02 billion by civilian salaries. Increasingly savings are made by shifting clerical duties to non-police staff who are cheaper to employ. A time bomb within the accounts is the £820 million paid out in pensions. As more and more officers retire and live longer, this will rise accordingly. The Home Office is conscious of the costs involved and how they might affect the police budget but are anxious not to start a row by tampering with pension arrangements. As a result, this section will grow and have an even greater effect on what is available for the service.

What the police always say is that they are dealing with an ever-increasing workload as crime increases. For although recorded crime is going down, 13.7 million incidents were dealt with last year up 2 per cent on 1995/94. The number of 999 calls — partly a result of our booming mobile phone culture, where a dozen people may report the same roadside incident — is up 38 per cent to 7.3 million a year. And while crime overall has started to fall over the last few years, violent crime remains on the increase. What value for money do the police provide then?

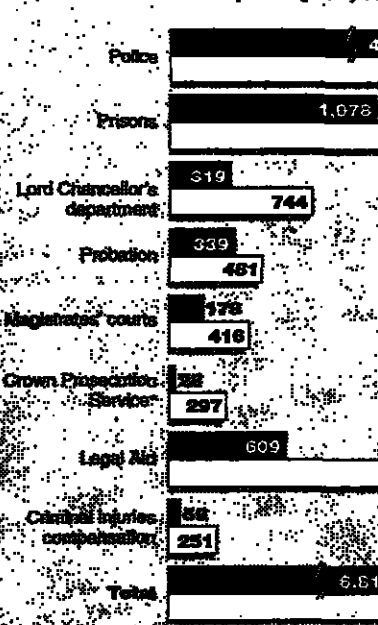
Compared to, for instance, the United States, we have a

Deconstructing bobby



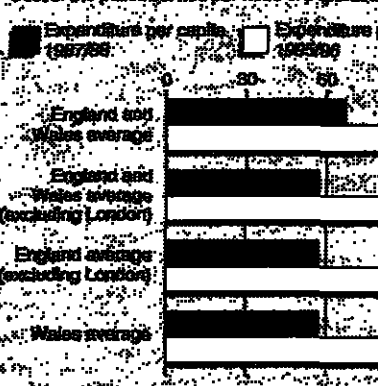
Cost of law and order

Expenditure on the criminal justice system, £m



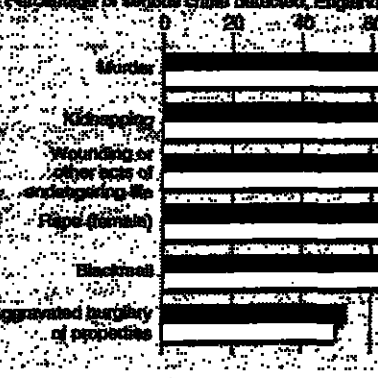
Price per head

Cost of the police service per head of population, £



Clear-up rates

Percentage of serious crimes detected, England and Wales



low murder rate, with 681 homicides in 1996, a small but significant increase on the 1984 figure of 624. Of the 1996 killings, 98 per cent were detected, compared with 96 per cent in 1988. Kidnapping has trebled to 1,429 but the detection rate remains high (81 per cent) as does the detection rate for wounding (74 per cent). Criminal statistics indicate that reported rapes have doubled from 4,835 in 1988 to 5,769 in 1996, with detection up from 72 per cent to 77 per cent (this, of course, does not mean that the detection leads to a successful prosecution).

On the less serious crimes but the ones that cause more widespread concern, figures are less impressive. An average of 12.2 per cent of burglaries are detected by primary means and a further 9.3 per cent by other means — essentially convicted burglars admitting to other burglaries. Detection rates of all crimes per officer average out at eight a year.

THE police recognise that burglary is the crime that causes the greatest distress to a great number of people and so have focused on it. This is one of the reasons for the decline in the number of reported burglaries. The police also recognise that the public likes to see more bobbies on the beat and one of the aims of the Sheehy Report was to address this. How much has changed?

There are now over 5,000 more constables than in 1988 and more than 8,000 additional civilian workers than in 1988. Constables have increased in number from 32,888 in 1988 to 38,132 in 1996, with the total strength (all ranks up to chief constable) at 127,158 — up from 124,080. In the meantime, the supervising ranks have been cut: superintendents by 37 per cent to fewer than 1,500.

The Home Office funded an additional 1,000 constables in response to public and police pressure. But the public still seems to feel that there are not enough on the streets. Satisfaction ratings for most police work is high — 92 per cent for response on burglaries, 86 per cent on 999 calls — but low for foot and mobile patrols (62 per cent).

What this week's Home Office figures on drugs-related crime raises is the question of how police manpower should be split between anti-burglar operations, drugs crackdowns, more visible officers, more stop-and-searches? In 1988, for instance, there were 148,600 stop and searches. By 1996, the

figure had climbed to 814,500. While 16 per cent of the stops led to an arrest in 1988, only 11 per cent did so in 1996. Drug seizures by police totalled 32,947 in 1988, compared to 107,635 in 1996.

Here are two areas of increased activity which are clearly time-consuming and both have a political perspective: stop and searches have long been seen by some members of the black community as a way of targeting them; cannabis — decriminalisation campaigners point out that the vast majority of drug prosecutions and seizures are of cannabis. Who knows best?

Jack Straw has so far had a comfortable working relationship with the police, having successfully won the confidence of officers who had been highly suspicious of Labour in the late seventies and early eighties. Now, with the benefit of reports by the Inspectorate, the Audit Commission and his own research, departments, Straw can look more closely at how funds are spent. It is only when publicity focuses on a case like that of Stephen Lawrence that the public learns in detail how its taxes are being used in the most sensitive of cases.

The service has gone through many changes in the last decade, some self-imposed, some in response to outside pressures. What Jack Straw, senior police officers and police authorities have to decide is whether, even now, their resources are being employed both as efficiently as they can be and in ways that attract the greatest public confidence.

Source: (1) Drug Testing; (2) Home Office Research; (3) What Price Policing? A Study of Efficiency and Value for Money in the Police Service; (4) HM Inspectorate of Police; (5) CIPFA Police Statistics; (6) What Price Policing?; (7) Audit Commission on Police Services, 1998; (8) Home Office Police Strength Return; (9) Audit Commission on Police Services 1996; (10) HO Statistical Bulletin: Drug Statistics 1996; (11) HO Statistical Bulletin: Drug Statistics 1995; (12) What Price Policing?; (13) What Price Policing?; (14) What Price Policing?; (15) What Price Policing?; (16) What Price Policing?; (17) What Price Policing?; (18) What Price Policing?; (19) What Price Policing?; (20) What Price Policing?; (21) What Price Policing?; (22) What Price Policing?; (23) What Price Policing?; (24) What Price Policing?; (25) What Price Policing?; (26) What Price Policing?; (27) What Price Policing?; (28) What Price Policing?; (29) What Price Policing?; (30) What Price Policing?; (31) What Price Policing?; (32) What Price Policing?; (33) What Price Policing?; (34) What Price Policing?; 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Comment

Diary

Emily Barr

WORDS have been exchanged at the BBC's Breakfast News. On Wednesday, the editors decided that the programme should explain the World Cup ticket situation in such depth, and at such length, that the story of a certain hazardous consignment making its way to the north of Scotland merited no coverage whatsoever during the entire two hour programme. Presenters Justin Webb and Sophie Raworth seized the opportunity to point out the story to viewers during their review of the papers, noting: "Oh look, this is very interesting" Webb was later seen engaging in a full and frank exchange of views with editors and is said to be "hopping mad". He will be spending the next week in the more cerebral surroundings of The World Tonight where, we can only hope, such a situation is less likely to arise.

GODLINESS aside, nothing gives the Diary more pleasure than a bit of cleanliness. To mark the National Spring Clean Campaign, we urge readers in Peterborough to attend the Town Hall at 11.15 this morning. There they will be able to watch Alderney, the newest Wombles, and local MP Helen Brinton boarding the MacDonald's bus for a day spent making good use of the things that the everyday folk leave behind. Helen and Alderney will enjoy lunch at MacDonald's and a magic show. All reports welcomed.

AS Rosie Boycott leaves this sorry Independent for the more staid confines of the Express, we would like to point out that there are many uses of cannabis to interest her new readers. It can relieve the suffering caused by glaucoma, scotoma and MS, for example. Furthermore, according to the Sindle, life without cannabis involves "more crime". Hemp cloth can also be useful. The Express is, in short, the perfect forum for Rosie to continue her crusade for legalisation. Good luck to her.

IN Cheltenham, there is a lack of consensus when it comes to pigeons. At St Mary's Church, 20 have been shot dead by marksmen because church officials were annoyed because they blocked gutters and damaged the belfry. More cheerily, in another part of town, RSPCA inspector Dave Johnson-Hill spent three hours on his hands and knees saving 40 pigeons who were trapped under a netting over the Midland Bank. Make your minds up, people of Cheltenham.

A PRESS release from the Campaign for Freedom of Information reveals, very openly, that next Tuesday the Freedom of Information awards will be presented to "individuals who have fought effectively against official secrecy" by none other than Lord Irvine of Lairg. The same Lord Irvine, that is, who made his decorations sign the Official Secrets Act when they were putting up that wallpaper. Just the man for the job.

HEARTWARMING news from Russia, where scientists have discovered a previously unknown blue rock in the Urals. The Fortean Times reports that, after careful consideration, scientists have named it Dianite, and souvenirs and jewellery are being crafted as we speak. Well, it's what she would have wanted.

QUOTE of the day: "That is so beautiful that if all the people in Afghanistan were made to hear it, I think they'd stop fighting." — David Lloyd Webber, aged five, listening to daddy Julian playing the cello.



These women have found their cause, but they're not sure what it is

Decca Aitkenhead



BY Tuesday the rumours in the West Country had grown so wild that national news agencies had given up even trying to report them. It was left to local radio and gossips to spread them, a task they performed so proficiently that protesters were out in at least three separate towns that night, each group convinced Sidney Cooke was in their local police station. If there's one thing guaranteed to get people out on the streets today, it is the whispered arrival of a paedophile. The helpfulness of such protests is increasingly being questioned. What we haven't asked, however, is whether these protests actually have anything at all to do with paedophiles.

The nightly picket outside Yeovil police station begins with excitable teenage girls huddled under umbrellas, who seem more like hopeful fans camped outside a pop star's hotel than protesters. Kids free-wheel past on bikes: a little boy has a picture of Cooke wrapped round his face like a Halloween mask and is spooking his mates. A bunch of lads are here because, they say, it's a laugh, and because Cooke's a dirty old shit. One of them thinks you can't put that in the papers. "Yes you bloody well can. And I'll sign it as well." Mothers with prams gather in the dusk.

On Tuesday night there are over 100 people here, and something of a rift is developing. One woman has brought along a noose, and the organisers are peevish, fearing they will look like a lynch mob on the telly. A voice shouts out, "But if we turn nasty they'll have to listen." "If you want to turn nasty, we'll be a witch hunt." "So? What's wrong with that? We used to burn witches

and it worked." A hasty vote on whether to turn nasty is taken, and soundly defeated. The woman with the noose retreats, sour faced, but is later caught showing it to the TV cameras.

They hold a candlelit vigil in the dark and a minute's silence for Jason Swift, during which women stare down at their cupped gloves of light, transfixed. Afterwards, people get up on railings and address the crowd, mostly raging at Paddy Ashdown (leader of the Lib Dems and MP for Yeovil) for describing them as a lynch mob on the news; people turn to each other and nod exaggeratedly, like sixth formers acting a crowd scene for a school play. When the odd voice heckles — "Kill the bastard Cooke!" — scandalised titters shiver through the crowd. Every so often, someone stares up at a window in the station, claiming to see a shadow move; everyone points, and rapt faces gaze up as if witnessing some satanic apparition.

What is going on in Yeovil? In this crowd are grandmothers, teenagers, businessmen, few of whom if any have attended a protest before in their life (and they make this point with pride). But it turns out that few are even confident that Cooke is in Yeovil. That is not the point. What Cooke offers, wherever he is, is a rare opportunity to really hate someone, loudly, publicly, and with absolute impunity. It is a matter of good and evil, charge with the righteousness of children's innocence, and so a gesture against Cooke defines you as decent. There are very few groups of people you can respectably hate any more. Paedophiles are the very thing.

This is one explanation, but it is not enough to account for the week's events in Yeovil. Some of those in the crowd just came along for a bit of sport, but many have been engaged in a formidable operation. Since Saturday, a group of broadly uneducated mothers with no experience of this sort have formed a team, organised banners, had posters printed for free, fielded the media, persuaded Tesco's to take a petition in their store, got hold of free candles, and pressured Paddy Ashdown, as their MP, to hold a special meeting with them after a

group experiences which used to define people's sense of self, and which are no longer available to them. And so now, people like Debra organise against paedophiles. In a few years, the cause will be something else.

Paedophiles are one of the few groups you can respectably hate

They meet daily at one of their houses, where Channel 5 and ITN camera crews film them plotting their next moves, amid the clatter of kids kept home ("Because I've got a nasty man in the middle of my school," a little girl explains to me). By Wednesday, they had heard of the Cranham police chief Ian Oliver ("Well, he's got to go," they agree, and add this to their list of demands, although they cannot remember his name and have to ask me for details of his misdemeanours), and Megan's Law (about revealing the whereabouts of offenders), which they are now demanding be introduced, although they're not "utterly up to it" just yet. They talk excitedly about liaising with other groups, but indulge in few lurid diatribes about Cooke.

"I've never felt more educated in my life," the chief organiser, Debra Spencer, tells me. "People I've known for years are saying at last I've found my cause." She is flushed, giddy and exhilarated; none of the women has slept much, and they are high on adrenalin.

What Debra has probably found, in fact, is not "her cause" but common cause — the sensation of communal motivation. Their demonstrations have shades of political rallies, religious ceremonies, union meetings — all those

This is no more about paedophiles than which hunts were about witches, or the mass grieving for Diana was about Diana, or football hooliganism was about football. Of course people in Yeovil are concerned for their children. But statistically, their kids are more likely to be run over by a car on the way to the protests — or abused by the men staying home to look after them while their mothers march — than to be hurt by a man like Sidney Cooke. The danger is that legislators will mistake their zeal for public feeling about paedophiles, and be pressured into passing ill-conceived legislation.

Debra has been thoughtful in every aspect of organising the campaign. Then I ask her what she thinks should actually be done about paedophiles. She pauses, blank, and asks her fellow organiser to help her out with an answer. Just say the same sort of thing as me, her friend says. Yeah, she agrees, but what's that?

Shoot the lot of them

Victoria Brittain



THE Pope, Amnesty International and UN human rights officials have united to condemn the Rwandan government for its decision to execute at least 20 *génocidaires* in public today, and to appeal for a last minute change of mind. Between them they will no doubt influence world opinion to believe that the Rwandan government has, as Amnesty puts it, gone in for "a brutal pretence of justice" which will damage any hope of reconciliation... and perpetuate the cycle of violence.

It is in fact these influential outsiders whose intervention is likely to do just that. Rwanda's problem today, as in 1994 when a seventh of the population was killed, and over the 30 years of exclusion and repression of Tutsis, is that a very institution has allowed killers to get away with murder. The national government in Rwanda today is trying to create a state based on respect for human life and the law. They are doing so against the background of a country in which every institution was shattered in the genocide, where the killers show no remorse, and where their extremist Hutu allies are daily killing civilians in the northwest.

No outsider has an idea of how to stop this killing, nor how 100,000 prisoners can be brought to trial.

And no three bodies of outsiders could cut less ice in Kigali than the Pope, Amnesty and the UN.

THE Roman Catholic church in Rwanda was deeply implicated in the 1994 genocide, and some church leaders abroad continue to cover-up for the shameful record of their brother priests in exile or prison. As one survivor said yesterday of the Pope, "In 1994, where was he?" Amnesty's reputation from years of painstaking work for prisoners across the world has been tarnished, in this region at any rate, by mistakes and apparent partiality in its reports on Rwanda. Similarly, Mrs Mary Robinson, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, admired in Africa for her visit to Somalia during the American/UN debate in 1992 and for being the first head of state to visit Rwanda after the genocide, lost her lustre after a visit to Rwanda late last year. Her criticism of the government for lacking commitment to reconciliation was "wrong and grossly unfair", according to Dr Tajideen Abdul-Rahem, general secretary of the Pan African Movement. He was certainly

speaking for the region when he wrote a critical seven page open letter to Mrs Robinson.

Outsiders have an appalling reputation in Rwanda since the genocide, and with good reason. Current hearings in the French Parliament about France's role are unlikely to reveal quite how deeply they were involved with the extremists whose planned genocide was widely known in the diplomatic and aid community. But it is an open secret in Kigali. UN peace keepers failed to prevent the genocide, to the shame of some of its own most senior officers. The UN Refugee Agency allowed the killers to use their camps over the border in Zaire as training and resupply facilities for the next rounds of killings, and to use women and children as shields.

These killers planned in 1994 to exterminate every Tutsi and taught the population that participation in the genocide was a national duty. In the crowded prisons the tens of thousands of peasant prisoners are controlled by the very same men who gave the orders for the genocide.

Inside the prisons the leading *génocidaires* are teachers, doctors, priests, nuns, local politicians. They run their old networks. There are reading classes, thousands of pink pyjama-clad prisoners are led in prayer, and when new prisoners arrive the leaders organise tribunals and teach the new prisoners to plead not guilty. The arrogance of these people, their certainty that their killing days will come again is fed by every outsider who calls for clemency.

If these evil people were let out of prison there would be a new bloodbath in Rwanda.

The leadership in Rwanda is very cautious. Other African leaders have been advising them for many months that quick firing squads for 5,000 of the most notorious

killers would bring the country some stability by destroying the confidence of those extremists still infiltrating from the remote borderlands with the former Zaire. But this is a methodical government, and, contrary to Amnesty's claims of "grossly unfair trials", the accused have had lawyers and appeals wherever possible.

No one among the leadership is happy about executions — though among the ordinary survivors plenty of people are — and they have waited four years for the blood to cool.

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan is due to visit Rwanda in two weeks. No outsider knows better what happened in 1994, when he was head of UN peacekeeping. He has a unique chance to show the Rwandese people that all outsiders are not the same, and that some can show public sympathy, and even remorse.

New Labour persists in viewing the British people as incorrigibly conservative

Free the B 6

John Gray

THE Government seems set to go ahead with its decision to ban over-the-counter sales of vitamin B 6 in doses of over 10 mg. It defends its decision by claiming there is a risk of harm with larger doses. Is it showing a legitimate concern for health and safety? Or is it being needlessly paternalistic? The public inclines to the latter view. MPs and government officials have received more letters protesting against the ban than they have received on any subject other than BSE. Many of the people who bought the 2,500,000 large-dose packs of the vitamin last year view the fact that in future they will need a prescription as a heavy-handed restriction on their personal choices.

They are right. Not for the first time, the Government

appears to have committed itself to an authoritarian stance that large sections of the public reject and virtually no one actively supports. To be sure, it claims that it is acting on scientific advice. But on this and many similar questions scientists are divided. Some point to studies that suggest serious risks to a few who take heavy doses; others refer to the large numbers of people — many of them women using it to alleviate PMS — who appear to have benefited from it for many years without harmful side-effects. In truth there is no scientific consensus on the scale of the risks. When scientists are divided in this way government must take a decision of principle. It must invoke the fundamental values by which its policies are guided.

In its handling of the BSE crisis the last Conservative government showed that it

had no guiding values. It repeatedly invoked a new authority, "the science", to underwrite the desultory policies into which it stumbled from time to time, in the forlorn hope of escaping responsibility for their consequences. But the present Government's failing is not that it has no overall guiding values. It is that on some important issues of personal freedom its policies appear to be guided by a backward-looking outlook that does not reflect the values of Britain's liberal majority.

FOR the many thousands of people who have written to their MPs to protest against Government policy on vitamin B 6 it raises fundamental issues of personal freedom. Rightly, they view it as an attack on their ability to make responsible choices about their own health.

Restricting the availability of a widely used vitamin is not a narrow issue of consumer regulation. It denies the basic freedom of people to make their own judgments of the benefits and risks of different ways of safeguarding health. The growing popularity of all kinds of complementary medicine shows that this is a freedom to which many people are deeply attached. A deep movement in public opinion is underway. Voters have a declining tolerance of restraints on choice whose necessity cannot be unequivocally demonstrated. For most, the mere say-so of authority — whether it be political, religious or scientific — is no longer enough to justify policies that diminish personal freedom. Harm to others, or a definite public interest, must be at stake. Few of those who think in this way are dogmatic libertarians.

But they are mistrustful of restrictions whose justification is paternalist or merely moralising. For this emerging majority, ethical life has to do with personal autonomy and self-realisation, not with some imposing their values on others. That



is why legislation making the age of consent the same for gay people as it is for the rest of the population is unlikely to be controversial — and why the country is far less adamantly resistant to cannabis law reform than the Government imagines.

New Labour persists in viewing the British people as incorrigibly conservative, when the balance of evidence suggests a major shift that is predominantly liberal. If a truly modern Britain means anything it is a country in which the autonomy of individuals is consistently respected. Yet the Government's current stance seems designed to reflect an older, more collectivist Britain in which government could count on public deference towards authority. For much of the electorate, that Britain has become a foreign country. Whether Blair's Government proceeds with its proposed restrictions on vitamin B 6 will say something important about how equipped it is to govern the modern country that Britain has become.

John Gray is professor of European thought at LSE.

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The legacy of antibiotics

Closer surveillance is vital

IT READS more like a horror story than a parliamentary report a world in which previously eliminated infectious diseases return with no effective medicines to combat them. The report — from the House of Lords science and technology committee — reminds readers of what health care was like before the introduction of antibiotics 60 years ago: tuberculosis patients suffering isolated deaths in sanatoria; frequent post-operative wound infections; bone infections requiring drainage for year after year and syphilis advancing in its late stages to insanity. It points to other problems which the ravages of revitalised bacterial infection would pose: new threats from typhoid and bacillary dysentery, pneumonia, meningitis, and gonorrhoea. Yet, misuse of antibiotics in intensive farming and over-prescribing by doctors are leading the world back to pre-penicillin days. The committee's conclusion couldn't be blunter: "This enquiry has been an alarming experience, which leaves us convinced that resistance to antibiotics and other anti-infective agents constitutes a major threat to public health and ought to be recognised as such."

This was not a committee of amateurs. It included distinguished scientists and doctors, who heard evidence from a long list of experts. This is not the first such warning. The World Medical Organisation, which represents more than 8 million doctors in 77 countries, has repeatedly warned of the danger of emerging multi-drug resistant organisms. The Lords report, coincided

with a New Scientist report suggesting the Public Health Laboratory Service had identified a new super bug "resistant to just about everything".

In the wake of the BSE scandal, we know how easily warnings are ignored. The farmers were at it again yesterday stoutly defending their use of antibiotics as "a vital tool in safeguarding the health of animals". Do they never learn? Compassion in World Farming is likely to win many new recruits with its call for a total ban on the use of antibiotic growth promoters. The Lords committee called for a ban on growth promoters which use the same antibiotic categories as human medicines. Yesterday's farming response underlines the need for legislation as well as vigilant surveillance from the new food standards agency. The medical response was more honest with GPs openly admitting that the demands of patients for "quick fixes" and the pressure of overcrowded local surgeries led to over-prescribing. Ironically, antibiotics are not just ineffective but counter-productive in the treatment of many complaints which take patients to their GPs — sore throats, ear ache, and chest infections caused by viruses rather than bacteria. The pears believe the most common misuse was prescriptions for such viral infections. It could be worse.

Fortunately, both the Government and the industry have resisted calls for over-the-counter antibiotic sales. But both the public and doctors need more education. The Chief Medical Officer signalled yesterday there would be new guidelines with a government review of the same issue due to report shortly. Hospitals could help by putting more emphasis on traditional hygiene standards rather than quick-fix antibiotics for halting cross-infections. Most important of all is closer surveillance of

what is happening on the ground. This must mean ministers restoring the cuts which they had planned to apply to the Public Health Laboratory Service. You cannot stop infections if you do not know they are happening.

Cook's detours

He is certainly inimitable

A COME BACK week for Robin Cook and one which has generated more positive headlines than the Foreign Secretary has become accustomed to during his domestic difficulties. The first Annual Report on Human Rights was condemned as "glib" in predictable quarters. His robust defence of the Blairite "Third Way" in domestic politics was denounced as complacent by Michael Howard, as was (before it was even delivered) last night's *tour d'horizon diplomatique* at the Lord Mayor's Banquet.

That will provide some comfort for Mr Cook. The governments of Margaret Thatcher and John Major cheerfully sold weapons and dams abroad (sometimes as a package) in what was often a cynical manner, dressed up as *realpolitik*. Very often the recipient state's credit proved as doubtful as its ethics. Mr Cook and Ms Short have at least made a connection and made a start, just as the Blair administration has made a start in repairing Britain's emaciated political muscle in the European Union. In Washington the bended knee muscle works as well as ever.

But even Mr Howard can be allowed to say there is no room here for much back-patting. The Foreign Secretary may have picked the right fight during his visit to Israel (did Mr Blair thereby benefit from a chastened Israeli mood?), but his combative

candour caused genuine offence in pre-election India. British arms exports to Indonesia, Turkey and elsewhere still thrive. Nigeria's military regime endures.

Mr Cook is too clever not to know that a loudly proclaimed ethical foreign policy makes an easy target. But he believes it is worth a try: incremental progress is very New Labour. Less expected by admirers of this seriously left-wing politician, was his endorsement of "Third Way" revisionism. This will rightly be seen as a *realpolitik* pay-back for Mr Blair's support during his matrimonial break-up (a rare example of a shotgun divorce), his mishandled rows over secretaries and clandestine remarriage. Like Lord Irvine, another formidably clever Scot, Mr Cook lacks PR flair.

But it is more than that and Robin's endorsement is worth having, even if Tony's team wrote the first draft. Tony Benn offered an apocalyptic critique of Blairism's threat to democracy in last week's *Tribune*. But Mr Cook's career is proof of the Foreign Secretary's wiser insistence that "political theory must alter with the society it tries to describe." Anti-devolution, anti-Europe, anti-nuclear, he has been them all. He remains the inimitable Robin Cook.

Upside Downs

Will the plans survive a gale?

THE SOUTH Downs are a linear lung of fresh air in densely populated southern England. Yesterday's proposals from the Countryside Commission (CC) respond to a threat which has long been clear to Downs men and Downswomen: the whole stretch, particularly in the eastern section, is under multiple pressure. The most obvious threat

— the 32 million people who visit some part of the Downs in one year — may not be the worst. Most of them concentrate on the most scenic spots, walking at most a mile of so up and down the South Downs Way. New roads, communication masts, golf courses and shopping centres are a more serious challenge. Local planning authorities are more likely to approve a new superstore than allow a cottage to have a new garage. The most lasting damage has been done, over several decades, by farming practices more often than not in the pursuit of subsidies. Hilltop clumps of beech are allowed to fall victim to storm and age without replanting. Springy downland turf is turned into flinty fields. Footpaths are hemmed in by wire and fence: the broad green lanes have disappeared.

The CC's proposal to maintain the South Downs (merging the Hampshire and Sussex sections) as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, but with new enhanced powers, will not satisfy those who have been lobbying for National Park status. The issue is not one of name: indeed, Sir Chris Bonington and his fellow-campers originally called for something "equivalent" to a National Park. Many local interests including the Society of Sussex Downsmen believe that a unitary National Park is not the answer for a zone divided between so many local authorities. Nor do the parks always resist pressures for development.

The question is whether this "enhanced" Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty can deliver enough funding, protection and management to be an effective statutory body. The Countryside Commission's recommendations for the Sussex Downs are part of a larger package to be put to the government in the summer. It needs to be tougher than it sounds — or it may be brought down by the next gale.

Letters to the Editor

Shopping and surfing

SO Trevor Roberts (A down on the dunes, April 22) wants to knock down out-of-town shopping centres? This will not happen, but there is a better use for them, especially in light of the 4.4 million homes that are needed over the next 20 years. Now that the green belt has been scarred by the centres, maybe it would be better to build houses around them so that people could once again walk to the shops. Mark Bhasini, University of Brighton.

YOUR claim "Quite what use 15 Internet terminals are to the young unemployed of Hackney is a moot point" (Good deal? — Space, April 17) is incorrect. The Net can be used by them to search through job adverts, send an application letter with an attached CV, look at a company's website before an interview, check how to get there, perhaps book the appropriate ticket and then, after getting the job, decide where and how to celebrate. I hope that if Will Fulford-Jones ever has the misfortune to be unemployed, he has access to the Internet. Edward Power, Brussels.

RICHARD Slipp, with his affluence of Canadian patriotism (Letters, April 23) is much too generous to his Usanian neighbours in allowing them nominal sway over an entire continent. Douglas Coupland is as American as Carlos Fuentes or Alberto Fujimori. That Mr Coupland also happens to be a Canadian may have been regarded as unnecessarily specific by the TV listing writer. Paul Sampson, Newcastle upon Tyne.

We do not publish letters where only an e-mail address is supplied; please include a postal address. The Country Diary is on page 14.

Football gets a kicking

PAUL Hayward shows a healthy scepticism about healer Eileen Drewery and her connections with soccer (Come on Eileen, I swear you mean everything, April 22). As a PE teacher for 27 years and now a professional healer, I can vouch for the kick-starting or accelerating of the body's own healing mechanisms. An increasing number of people, unlike their health-care mentors, are turning to the "twitching on" of these autonomous healing processes as opposed to treatment by radical surgery or profligate drug therapy.

That many alternative therapists are succeeding where conventional medicine has failed is a fact. Harmless stuff, according to Paul Hayward, but could Hoddle have opened the more reactionary sporting community to dealing with acute and chronic injuries in a way that is more lasting and long-lasting? Barry West, Dewsbury, W. Yorks.

PAUL Hayward makes reference to Robbie Fowler's Catholic faith. While the men-

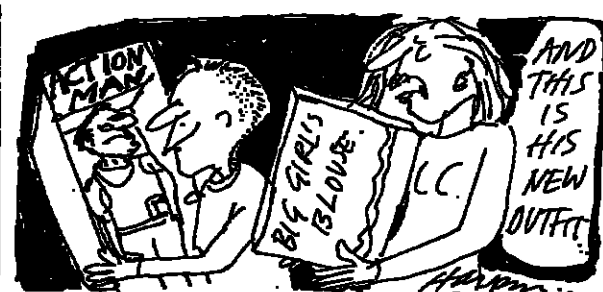
tion of Fowler's faith may be relevant in a sports article, the piece suggests Catholic belief is both outdated (based on a 2,000-year-old book) and unreasonable (using "waters that are supposed to represent the body of Christ"). I thought the Guardian has always promoted tolerance of differences. Paul Hayward presumably does not share the faith I share with Robbie Fowler and a billion other Catholics. That is his right and I respect it. It does not give him the right to make gratuitously offensive remarks and dismiss something he does not understand. Rev Kieran Conry, Catholic Media Office, London.

FOR people like me who loathe the football, it is incredibly relaxing to sit back and read about those poor, adulated supporters who are desperately trying to get a ticket for their next fix (Just another day at the office. But out there, 20 million people are trying to talk to you, April 23). My fingers stray toward the phone dial; shall I ring

anyway, then tell them I want to order a pizza? Thank goodness it's all happening in France this time. At least we won't be inundated with the horrid scarves and all the other extraneous paraphernalia associated with the most boring game on earth (apart from cricket, of course). Michael Mitchell, High Wycombe.

MILLIONS of Britons spent Wednesday jamming the World Cup ticket hotline. No doubt, many were doing it from their workplaces. Has Chancellor Brown calculated the full cost of this economic inactivity? I think we should be told. Terry Phillips, Newport.

RE your headline, Women Ripped by Italy (April 23): what is wrong with England plucked by Italy? Can we look forward to World Cup headlines: Men surprised by Tunisia; Men hammered by Colombia or Men lose on penalties to Germany? Chris Knott, Dover.



Real Action Men don't ride pillion

I WAS shocked to read that Action Man is being again revamped as "unacho" (Audition to find sensitive toy soldier with killer instinct sorts out man from boys, April 22). My grandsons (2 and 4) love theirs as male dolls that they dress and take to bed, their parents having thrown away their rifles, hand grenades and knives. But, for their birthdays, I am unable to find a kit that does not brand Action Man as a fascist and a racist. The parents have a powerful motor bike with a pillion for his little bags? Or AM the flying Doctor? Or AM the UN peacekeeper if he must be macho? I would like to see AM the fly fisherman or footballer, or

tennis player. No wonder little boys think that killing others is what men are for. Iris Howells, Eastbourne.

I answered to the question posed by Lt Col Hodges (Girl power and guns, April 23), "in the back of a Warrior" are seven infantrymen, and one chemical toilet. How many girls would want to put themselves in that position? Given the number of women who are more than happy to make use of the gents' toilet in their local night-club on a Saturday night, quite a few it would seem. When it comes down to it, one war zone is just like any other. Tom Bailey, London.

Is brutal Brother Brickley a thing of the past?

LIKE Steve Boulton (No brother to me, 23 April) I was a recipient of Brother Brickley's rough pedagogy at St Mary's College in Crosby in the 1960s. We called him "the Brick" and speculated that the strange pucker of skin on the back of his neck was where Dr Frankenstein had made rather a crude job of sewing him up.

Leather straps, board compasses playfully jabbed between one's terrified fingers, one's head slammed down on the desk from behind so that one's nose bled, were all part of the fun at St Mary's and were tactics eagerly acquired by the lay staff, including the famous history teacher who, with his blonde hair and glittering eyes, resembled one of those sadistic SS officers in war films of the time. But surely the most damning criticism of the school was the unimaginative nature of its educational cramming. With a mission to educate, the Brothers were simply not

much good at it. It was a philistine environment whose most famous product was the current director-general of the BBC.

Need I say more? Nicholas Murray, Powys, Wales.

I AM concerned about the stereotyping encouraged by "my awful Catholic school" articles, which seem to abound in the quality press. Rarely do these articles point out that the small independent schools run by religious orders decades ago bear no relation to the modern Local Education Authority Catholic school. Rarely are there any balancing articles describing what Catholic education means for the vast majority of pupils receiving it today. The Northern Ireland situation and the forthcoming marching season there reminds us that anti-Catholicism is still a live issue. Matthew Huntbach, London.

Putting women in the frame

LINDA Grant concurs with David Thomson on the character failings which distinguish men as film directors and disqualify women (Boys only in the big picture, G2, April 21). She is unfair to those women who have been remarkably successful as creators in that branch of animation. Animation studios foster a more co-operative ethos, and in the last 30 years, which have seen the emergence of a raft of independent studios, women as directors have come well to the fore. In this

country Joy Batchelor, Alison de Vere, Diane Jackson, Joanna Quinn, Candy Guard, and Alison Snowden, are all established film-makers. There is also a new generation of younger people, including An Vrombaut, Ruth Lingford, Susan Young and Karen Kelly. Internationally there was the pioneer Lotte Reiniger (although she too worked largely in Britain), Caroline Leaf, Joanna Priestley, Monique Renault, Oksana Cherkassova and many others. Richard Taylor, Craven Arms, Shropshire.

Hack watch

ED VULLIAMY writes with a blunt and convicting about his "accused honour" of testifying before the War Crimes Tribunal at The Hague, but he fails to address the fundamental issues at stake for journalists who witness human rights abuses (I must testify, April 22). If they are perceived as potential witnesses for the prosecution by any party, then their ability to gather information will be severely impeded and their physical safety will be jeopardised. Aidan White, General Secretary, International Federation of Journalists, Brussels.

Udder ingredient

JOANNA Rhythman (The killing fields, April 18 April) asks where in the food chain do all the calves' brains end up. As a former meat handler, I can confirm that they do quite legally end up as burgers, pies and sausages, simply labelled as "beef". However this is only the tip of the iceberg. In November last year I was shown an interesting consignment document accompanying meat for a supplier of a burger chain. The sheet read as follows: "Cows udders — country of origin, Germany." This was interesting on more than one account. First the company in question

boasts that its burgers are made from only the best quality beef. It is doubtful if many of its customers are aware as they bite into their greasy buns that they could in fact be chewing the udders of West-Phalian cows.

More pertinent is what this reveals about other scams as prices for beef in Britain have collapsed. As supermarkets buy at knock-down prices from Ireland, it even pays continental exporters to send their meat to Ireland to be re-labelled and sent across the Irish Sea to join in the bonanza. All of these activities are helped by the abolition of border controls by the EU. Mick De Selby, Glasgow.

Cool Uranium

Bel Littlejohn

UCH. The Australians have a word for it. Tall Poppy Syndrome. When a person gets to walk too tall, we cut them ruthlessly down to size. And that, I perceive, is what's happening to my good and valued friend Tony Blair. Tony's had a helluva week. Passing through Tel Aviv airport on Tuesday, he had to

call an emergency press conference in order to pass on the Government's congratulations to the producers of *The Full Monty* for scooping the Bafta awards. He'd barely embarked on his top-level talks with Benjamin Netanyahu when he was forced to excuse himself. "Look, I'm gonna have to ask you to schlep" so as to issue a press statement commending the decision by Granada to grant an early release to Deirdre Rachid. Another 20 minutes into his discussions with Mr Netanyahu and Tony was called out yet again, this time to make it clear he welcomed "unequivocally" Grant Bovey's decision to return to his wife Della and their two young daughters, whilst offering his "fullest sympathy" to the lovely Anthea Turner, pleading with the nation "let's not take sides". "On a personal note," he

added in an unscripted aside, "may I also mention that Ms Turner's estranged husband Peter Powell has acted with truly terrific dignity throughout his lengthy ordeal." And his sense of commitment to the British people didn't stop there. On arrival in Egypt, Tony called a press conference in the Cairo Hilton in order to combat rumours that he was indifferent to the separation between Mrs Anna Murdoch and her husband Rupert. "A good friend to New Labour". He took the opportunity to add that he was following the French inquiry into the death of Diana, Princess of Wales "with keen interest", that his heart went out to the family of the ailing Frank Sinatra, that both he and his kids were enjoying the new CD by Simply Red, and that he welcomed the new park-and-ride system recently put into operation by Chester council.

Just two short hours later, his office had issued a statement from him confirming that Tony would be wearing a short-sleeved Royal blue sash shirt while kicking a ball about with the kids this weekend, weather permitting, and adding that the Prime Minister has sent a handwritten message of deep-felt sympathy to Mr Dustin Hoffman on the conviction of his adopted daughter on a charge of embezzlement.

A BUSY guy doing one helluva busy job. About time someone gave him a break, you might think. Wrong again. Suddenly, whaddya know, Tall Poppy Syndrome sets in. Tony had barely regained his breath after a press conference in Abu Dhabi stressing his government's abiding enthusiasm for the new-look Radio 4 when he was attacked for letting a tiny little bit of

radioactive uranium into this country. Yet his critics seem unaware, bless 'em, that this policy is entirely in tune with Tony's long-standing commitment to increasing job opportunities in the Scottish health sector.

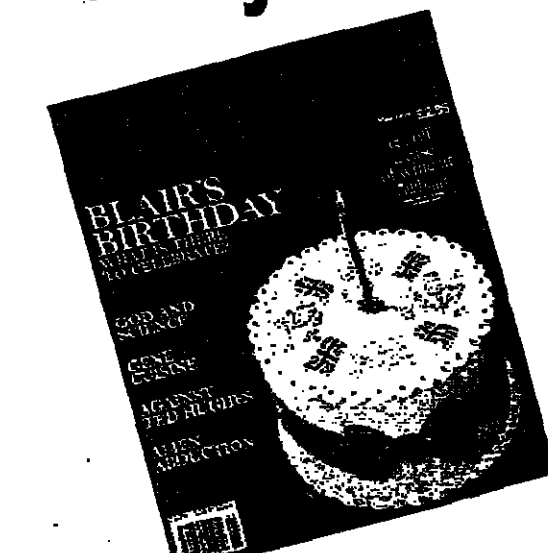
My own commitment to green issues is not in question. As an award-winning columnist, my opinions — many of them recycled under licence to the Scott Trust — have put me at the forefront of the Green campaign. With Anita Roddick, I spent three months in 1985 introducing Peppermint and Avocado Foot-Lotion to the Irigoi rain-forest tribesmen of New Mexico, so don't lecture me on environmental awareness, thank you very much.

It's already been announced that my award-winning Public Relations Agency, Bel & Franz, long-time specialists in Green matters, has accepted the government account for a

new "Let's Go Flesht!" Uranium promotion, designed to increase public awareness of the positive aspects of this attractive yet alluringly volatile element.

In June, we launch a Cool Uranium celebration, in which the very best of British fashion designers are given their chance to show uranium-based costumes in a gorgeous explosion of pinks, greens and oranges. In August, Peter M will be announcing the new Uranium Zone in the Millennium Dome Experience, letting visitors experience all the creative excitement of radioactivity for themselves, so that kids and adults alike will emerge from the zone positively humming and buzzing with reaction. Go, Uranium. Go! Obviously, Tony would have told you all this himself, only he was having to issue bulletins saying how much he was enjoying the new Nick Hornby.

Enlightened, monthly



David Marquand on New Labour's first birthday ♦ Science v Religion - what's the score? ♦ Ted & Sylvia - why the Birthday Letters are overrated ♦ Governing the internet - Europe against the USA ♦ Noel Malcolm on Kosovo ♦ Why literature ignores children ♦ Ireland's third way ♦ Alien abduction - the true story

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صبرنا من الاجل

Terminal velocity

Jet flights set to double as air travel booms

Keith Harper
Transport Editor

A DOUBLING in the number of passenger aircraft in 20 years from 9,700 to 17,900 was forecast yesterday by European jet-maker, Airbus Industrie, in a review of the world's fastest growing industries.

The company, in which British Aerospace has a 20 per cent stake, said that the number of people travelling on planes at present was the equivalent of every man, woman and child in Britain making a round-the-world trip every year.

Airbus's strategic planning vice-chairman, Adam Brown, said airlines would be making 88 per cent more flights in 20 years than now. "This will present a major challenge to airports and air-traffic control capacity. Those involved realise the urgency of the situation. Huge investment will be needed."

Airbus, a consortium from four countries — Britain, France, Germany and Spain — is moving to an era of large, 650-seater aircraft to cope with an annual passenger growth of 5 per cent. But according to Mr Brown, they will be less noisy and more fuel-efficient.

The company's A350 will be launched in 2004. Twenty firms are backing the \$8 billion project. The plane will allow passengers to sleep in their own private cabins on long-haul flights.

The world's biggest growth area is the Far East and China, which plans 25 new airports over the next decade. The region will account for 33 per cent of the world's fleet by 2017, compared with 25 per cent today.

Airbus's commercial vice-president, John Leahy, said: "Our latest forecast confirms that, despite the Asian crisis, this business will enjoy sustained growth."

With the delivery of new, modern airliners and the phasing out of ageing aircraft, air travel will become the cleanest, quietest and most efficient mode of transport."

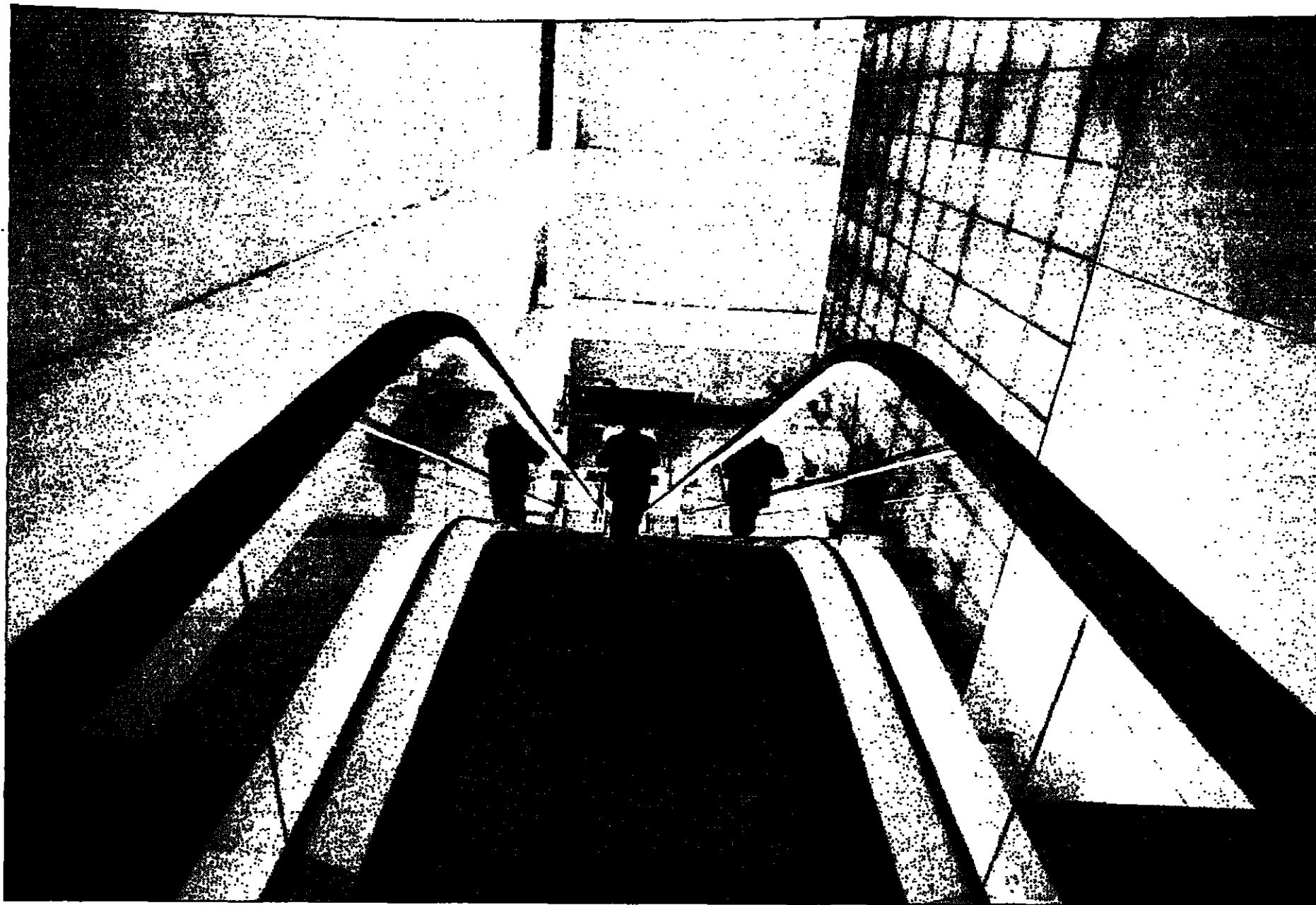
Mr Brown said that emissions of unburnt hydrocarbons and carbon monoxide from aircraft had been "dramatically reduced".

The Airbus 330 was the first aircraft in the world to go into service with its engines modified to reduce still further emissions of nitrous oxides, he said.

"We strongly believe that together action against road traffic rather than surcharges on aircraft would be more effective in protecting airport neighbours against pollution."

Mr Brown also argued that planes were quieter than trains. The area exposed to an annoying level of noise by aircraft taking off and landing was less than high-speed trains because the "noise footprint" created by a train stretched from its origin to its destination.

He said that the physical barriers needed to contain the noise from high-speed trains could become as serious an environmental threat as the noise itself. Airports used land five times more efficiently than rail, and six times more than road.



BAA-owned Heathrow Express yesterday opened Central Station, built 30 metres below the airport. It is the centrepiece of a \$440 million investment in Britain's first new private railway this century. Trains will run at up to 100 mph from Paddington every 15 minutes and the journey will take 15 minutes. One-way tickets will be £10. PHOTOGRAPH: MARTIN ARBLES

Euro ministers fly into protest

John Vidal reports on growing concerns over the predicted passenger explosion

THIRTY European transport and environment ministers met in Chester this afternoon to promote sustainable transport policies.

The politicians — who will arrive mostly by air — will be kept well clear, however, of a gathering of eco-activists and a deputisation representing more than 250 European consumer, environmental, social and transport groups worried about the type of explosion of air traffic predicted yesterday by Airbus Industrie.

years, they say, will mean fierce showdowns with the communities affected.

"It means the enlargement or creation of many new airports and runways, which will need scarce land close to cities," said Dr Simon Festing of Friends of the Earth. "An increase of air traffic on this

scale will stimulate car growth, and therefore the need for larger roads, more quarrying, loss of wildlife, noise and atmospheric pollution and congestion."

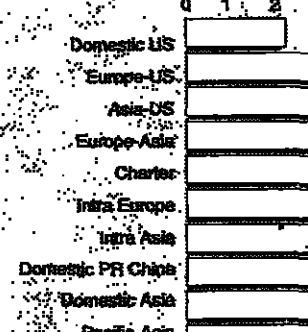
The industry claims that trade-offs must be made in

achieving a higher standard of living and that increased air travel will mostly benefit the poor. Greatest growth will occur in developing countries, it says, helping to stimulate depressed economies.

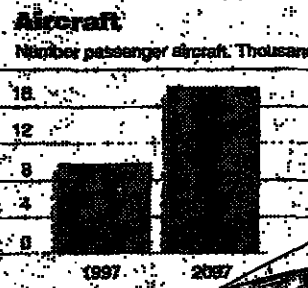
Airbus's growth predictions are similar to those of IATA, the industry body based in North America. They assume about 5 per cent growth in traffic a year — linked to optimistic forecasts of future

Up and away

Air traffic, Percentage average annual growth rate



Air traffic, Number passenger aircraft, Thousands



Clues that interest has peaked

Charlotte Denny

HOPES that interest rates have peaked have been reinforced by signs that house price rises are flattening and the pace of high street spending is easing.

A survey published today by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors shows that the pace of house price rises faltered in March.

It comes in the wake of official figures yesterday showing that annual growth in

retail sales fell last month to 4.1 per cent.

The Office for National Statistics said underlying growth in the sector, while strong, was well below the peaks it hit during the spending spree — fuelled by building society windfall payments — which began in the middle of last year.

"The retail sector has come off the boil," said Julian Jessop of Nikko Europe. "Together with yesterday's evidence that the labour market has settled down and the persistent weakness of manu-

facturing, this adds to the case for stable interest rates."

The evidence that the economy is slowing came as press reports suggested that the Bank of England's monetary policy committee decided by a clear majority to keep rates on hold at its meeting earlier this month.

At the two meetings prior to the latest, the committee had been evenly split about whether to raise rates, only the casting vote of the Governor, Eddie George, spared borrowers and home owners from another rise in the cost

of borrowing. An unreported story in the Financial Times yesterday claimed that one of the inflation hawks on the committee, Professor Charles Goodhart, had voted with the doves for no change in rates at the April meeting. The minutes of that meeting are not due to be released until May 13.

The Bank refused to comment on the report.

The ONS said that retail sales volumes rose by 0.3 per cent in March, below the 0.5 per cent City analysts, expecting a bounceback after

February's sharp fall, had pencilled in.

House prices started leveling in February and flattened in March, according to the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors.

On balance, 43 per cent of surveyors reported price rises in March, down one percentage point from February.

Nick Parsons from Paribas in London said that the figures suggested today's first estimate of economic growth for the first quarter of the year could be lower than expected.

Research chief queried drug trials

Julia Finch

THE research chief sacked by British Biotech had demanded a trial be reviewed by key drug regulators because he believed the company

might be spending too much time and money on only two potential products.

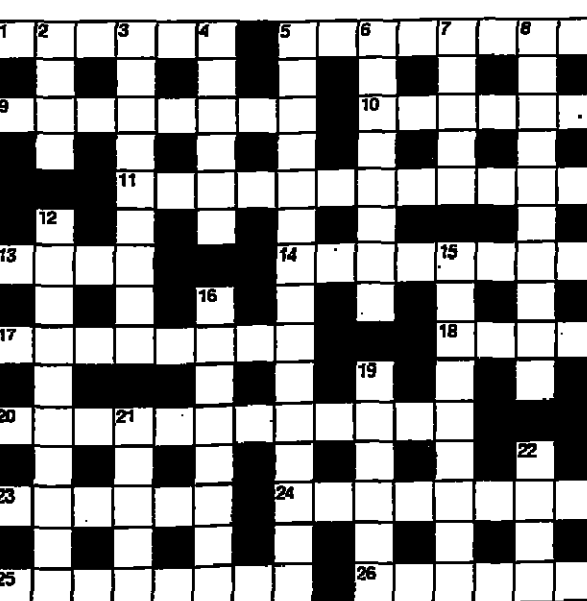
The flagship of Britain's biotechnology industry dismissed Dr Andrew Miller on Monday.

The company claimed he had aired his views, without authorisation, to fund managers at Perpetual, which holds an 8 per cent stake in British Bio.

The firm, led by Keith McCullagh, became a stock market favourite due to its cancer drug, Marimastat, and Zalcitabine, for acute pancreatitis.

Guardian Crossword No 21,257

Set by Janus

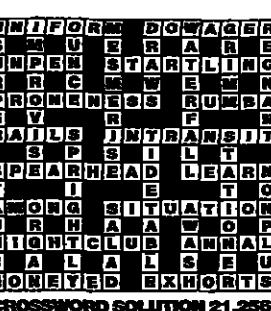


Across

- 1 Horse set standing firm (5)
- 5 Warning shout to animal ancestor (8)
- 9 Summit meeting for psychologist and wife (8)
- 10 Annoy the French on pitching tent (6)
- 11 Type of intimacy needed to secure a lady's cape (12)
- 13 One having nothing but indigo (4)
- 14 Dread hum coming from top of capstan? (8)
- 17 Wire border allowed back (8)
- 18 Orderly that took part in Marné attack? (4)
- 20 References Athenian set sail without? (12)
- 23 Turns aside when going round green (8)

Down

- 2 Pleasure trip to ancient city (4)
- 3 Fair lady packing a gun in trifle (9)
- 4 Rouse to anger, for example, musician on the way up (6)
- 5 Time to turn his fine mood perhaps (8,9)
- 6 Second athlete at university (6-2)
- 7 Stick — don't declare! (5)
- 8 As amenable as a trained sailor (4,5)
- 12 Not booked without qualification (10)
- 15 Crew taking fish with lever (9)
- 16 Air map is adapted for one-way travel (10)



CROSSWORD SOLUTION 21,255

Shortage of vital metal threatens car makers

Russian turmoil has made palladium prices rocket, writes Dan Atkinson

GLOBAL car production could be disrupted by skyrocketing prices of palladium, one of the vital elements in the catalytic converters fitted by law to millions of new vehicles to clean up exhaust emissions.

Political turmoil in Russia — which mines two-thirds of the world's palladium — has meant no new supplies since the end of last year.

The price has soared from \$120 an ounce (about \$75)

at the beginning of 1997 to \$400 an ounce with record rises in the past 48 hours.

One London analyst said yesterday that the surge was pushing the bill for western "pollution targets" "off the blackboard", adding that it was likely to wake up the West to the fact that anti-pollution measures were not cost-free.

This is the second year running that Russian supplies have been seriously interrupted, the difference

this time being that the price squeeze is proving far more severe.

Export licences had been drawn up, but the recent refusal of Russia's parliament, the Duma, to approve President Yeltsin's choice of prime minister, Sergei Kiriyenko, is thought to have seized up the system, leading to key supplies of palladium being stockpiled inside the country.

Even were the Duma to approve Mr Kiriyenko at its meeting later today, it could still be June before supplies begin to flow again and car-makers' stockpiles are already at critical levels.

Western legislators have specified that the catalytic converter, an 8in long by 4in diameter device, must contain standards that can best be achieved by the use of large quantities of palladium, which is efficient at the conversion of polluting hydrocarbons into carbon dioxide and water.

Yesterday, the British speciality metals group Johnson Matthey said palladium to a certain extent, but it would take time for specifications and car manufacturing processes to be changed over. Some analysts believe the switch could take 18 months.

The platinum price is already being dragged up in the wake of palladium, as the Russian blockade distorts the entire market.

Palladium is a key component also of goods, such as microwave ovens and mobile telephones, but these manufacturers can switch fairly easily to nickel.

The New York Mercantile Exchange said yesterday it was to remove limits on some palladium deals from Monday, to reflect the frantic market conditions.

Yesterday the premium being paid for palladium for immediate delivery was about \$80 an ounce.

Vauxhall workers vote to accept three-year deal

WORKERS at Vauxhall's car factories in Luton, Bedfordshire, and Ellesmere Port in Cheshire voted yesterday to accept a three-year deal which, for the first time, will link wages to sterling's exchange rate. The deal is expected to help secure the future of both plants, writes Seamus Milne.

Nick Reilly, chairman of the US-owned multinational, hailed a "historic day", which would guarantee "continued substantial investment", and announced that a replacement for the current Vectra model will be built in Luton. The new Astra will be made at Ellesmere Port.

The pay-and-conditions package accepted by 9,000 car workers at the two factories includes a 3.5 per cent rise in August and 3 per cent or the inflation rate — whichever is higher — in the second year.

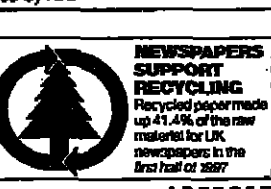
In year three, Vauxhall employees will get a raise in line with inflation — plus an extra 0.5 per cent if the sterling exchange rate falls below DM2.7 for two consecutive months.

The trade unions' acceptance of such a pay package — well below recent increases agreed at other British-based car firms — reflects the threat by Vauxhall's US parent company, General Motors, to close one or both of the plants unless costs were cut sharply.

Last week, Mr Reilly said he was giving up his £160,000 basic salary for a year to encourage the workforce to accept a tough agreement. Tony Woodley, the Transport and General Workers' Union's chief motor industry negotiator, said the majority in favour of the deal was a "common sense decision".

Welcoming Vauxhall's renewed commitment to UK car production, Trade Secretary Margaret Beckett said Ellesmere Port would receive additional regional grants.

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Friday April 24 1998

Shelving of global investment pact delights Third World campaigners

Rich nations retreat

Mark Atkinson
 Economics Correspondent

THE world's richest countries will stage a humiliating climbdown next week when they agree to postpone indefinitely plans to draw up a set of binding international rules governing investment by multinational corporations.

The Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) being negotiated by the 29 members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development has been criticised by development groups as a charter for business to ride roughshod over the environment and the poor.

A draft copy of a confidential statement from ministers to be published next week, and obtained by the Guardian, shows that, while the politicians will restate their commitment to the MAI, they will say further work is needed before it can be sealed. The statement refrains from setting a new deadline, stating merely that it should be concluded "at the earliest possible date".

OECD sources said the agreement, which has been postponed once before, has now effectively been put on hold until spring 1999 at the earliest.

"It has not been scuppered but it's certainly been put on the back burner for political reasons," one source said. "The negotiating group will continue under a new chairman, Lorenz Schomeros of Germany, but discussions over the next year or so will be conducted on a bilateral basis."

News of the delay was greeted with delight by Jessica Woodroffe, head of campaigns at the World Development Movement, a Third World lobby group. She said:

"This delay shows what a misconceived project it is. The negotiators must be very weary by now, dealing with conflicts on dozens of different fronts from labour rights to cultural diversity."

"Instead of calling a temporary truce, they would be better to start again looking at ways to enforce the responsibility of multinationals, not just their rights."

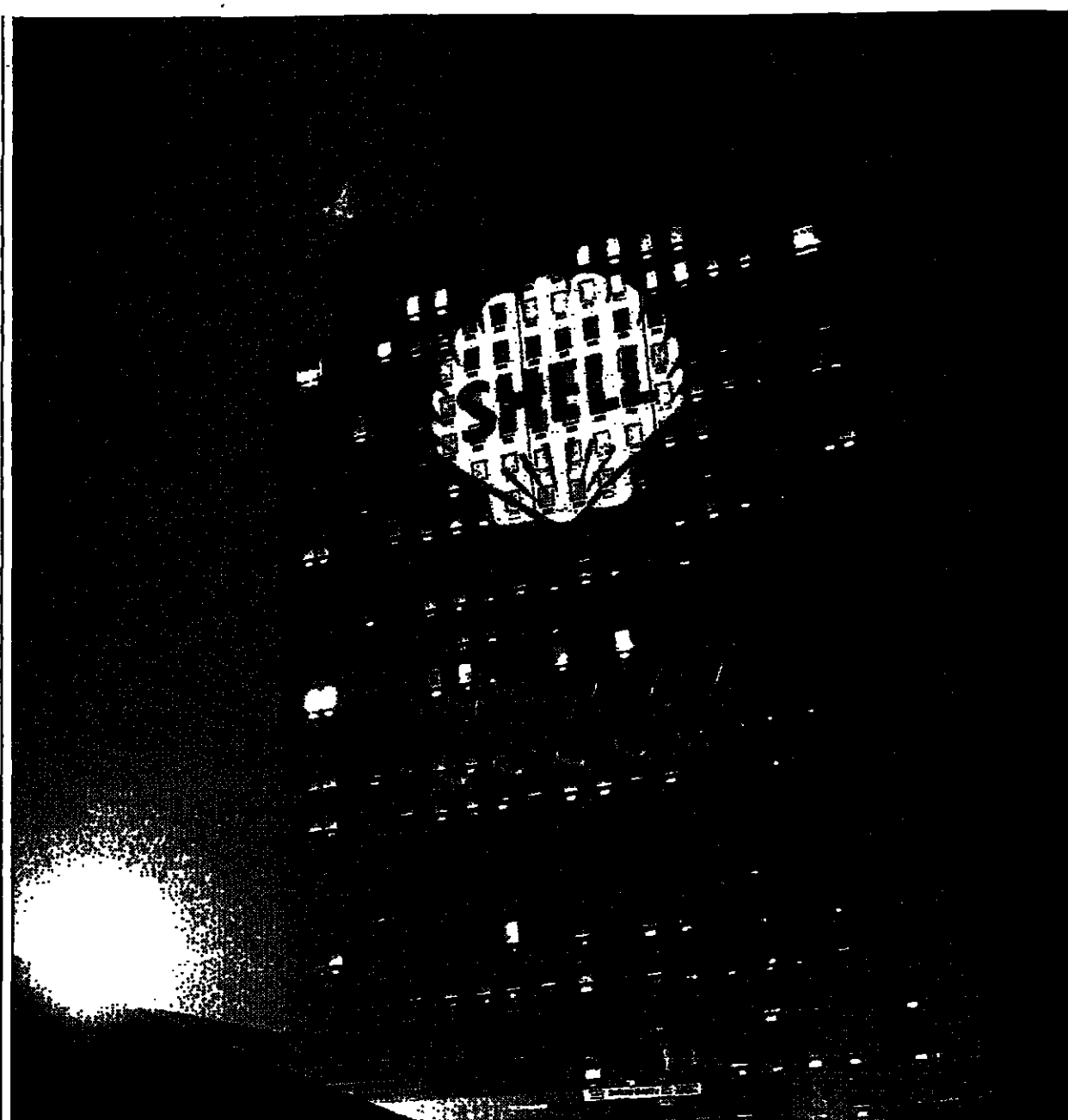
Ruth Mayne, policy adviser at Oxfam, said: "A new approach is needed, based on broad consultation and including the developing countries from the outset."

Discussions at the OECD on the MAI were launched in 1995 with the aim of protecting the foreign investments of multinationals such as oil companies Shell and BP from unfair treatment or expropriation by national governments. But they have been devilled by disagreements over, for example, whether or not to include environmental or labour protection clauses.

France has been spearheading resistance to the MAI and it has also run into trouble in the United States, where a coalition of trade unionists and environmentalists on the left and anti-free traders on the right could upset its passage through Congress, which is due to hold mid-term elections in November. In addition, the MAI conflicts with the Helms-Burton Act, which imposes sanctions on foreign firms investing in Cuba.

Sol Picciotto, professor of law at Lancaster University, said the MAI was the "last gasp of a neo-liberal agenda" which sought to tackle market integration without addressing the real issue of regulation.

"It's like a Swiss cheese. It has very broad investor protection obligations, and very many exceptions, carve-outs and special provisions. There are more holes than cheese," he said.



Hopes dimmed... multinational oil groups would have been prime beneficiaries of treaty

PHOTOGRAPH: MARTIN GOWIN

The proposals explained

What is the MAI?

The Multilateral Agreement on Investment is an international treaty which aims to promote economic growth by relaxing the rules on foreign investment. The rich industrialised countries which belong to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development have been negotiating it since September 1995.

What will it mean for countries signing up?

They will give up the right to

set different rules for foreign investors unless they negotiate a specific exemption. The French, for example, want to be able to keep the subsidies and restrictions which protect their film industry from the encroachments of Hollywood. Companies will be able to sue national governments if their profits or trade is harmed by local actions or rules.

What will the agreement achieve?

Advocates argue that it will boost economic growth by

allowing companies and investors freedom to choose the project with the best return on their money anywhere in the world. One supporter describes it as the "constitution for the global economy".

But what about the downside?

Opponents say it will curtail companies' rights with responsibilities and will lead to a global driving down of labour and environmental standards. At the moment the agreement contains no

specific provisions on either. Some economists think Third World countries would be harmed by being forced to let in multinationals without being able to regulate them. Developing countries are not party to the negotiations although a few of the larger ones have observer status.

What is holding up getting it signed?

Although all the participants say they favour the principle of liberalising investment

rules, when it comes to their own country they want exemptions. The biggest hypocrite at the talks is the United States which, while apparently preaching free trade, places sanctions on foreign companies which invest in Cuba.

Britain at least wins points on consistency: it has tabled the fewest exemptions apart from the gun-ho freetraders of the South Pacific, Australia and New Zealand, and apparently is not particularly concerned about labour or environmental standards, either.

What happens now?

It's not over yet by any means. Some countries — Canada for instance — think it would be better to negotiate the MAI at a forum where all countries are represented, such as the World Trade Organisation. This is the body which oversees the global rules on trading. It could prove even harder to get an agreement at the WTO, however, because some of the Third World countries which have a voice there are worried about the MAI.

Rival gingers up digital bidding

Evans in radio licence battle

Chris Barrie, Media Business Correspondent

CHRIS EVANS'S attempt to dominate the new world of digital radio is facing a challenge from a rival consortium led by one of his former sound engineers. Digital Media Broadcasting is planning to bid for the only national licence available to commercial radio for broadcasting digital. The application is being backed by the German consumer electronics firms Grundig and Bosch, the data services company Intelias, and Castor Media International, formerly the BBC's transmission business.

Only one other consortium has expressed its intention to bid. Digital One, which includes Talk Radio, the Ginge Media Group — the broadcasting firm owned by Evans — and the GWR Group, owner of Classic FM.

Peter Leutner, who is organising the new consortium and was head of sound at Planet 24, the broadcaster of Evans's Big Breakfast show, said the application had been planned for over a year.

Evans broadcast three existing channels — Classic FM, Virgin Radio and Talk Radio — but will also be free to choose five new ones.

This application will pitch not just rival consortiums but rival philosophies, too. Mr Leutner said his consortium was free of large organisations and able to buy in the most innovative programmes from the independent sector.

Insisting that Digital One was based around established radio companies, he said: "In the old system people with interesting programmes could not get a licence and if they passed the quality test, the authorities would award them a licence."

"Now the big players, who already have licences, are trying to get to run the transmission system too, closing the door to new players."



Chris Evans: facing a challenge

PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID SILTONE

Express papers marshalled for role in television fight

EXPRESS Newspapers could be used as a weapon in the battle to dominate digital television when services are launched this autumn following a deal struck yesterday between Lord Hollick and British Digital Broadcasting, writes Simon Beavis.

A three-month wrangle with BDB, owned by Carlton and Granada, was settled when Stephen Grahner was released by Lord Hollick's United News and Media to become chief executive of BDB. The deal means the third largest independent commercial company has joined the two biggest to take on Rupert

Murdoch in the digital television market. Carlton and Granada are to enter into a working relationship with Lord Hollick that could see United providing channels and using Express titles for special promotions.

Mr Murdoch is expected to use his own titles to promote digital satellite services from BSkyB, much as he does with Sky services.

Lord Hollick — who bid unsuccessfully for the digital licence — had originally refused to let Mr Grahner break his contract and served injunctions to hold him at United News-papers until next January.

BT broadcast ban lifted a year early

Simon Beavis
 Media Business Editor

BRITISH Telecom was given the green light yesterday to enter the television entertainment market from January 1 2001, a year before the Government said it was to lift its broadcasting ban on the company. The move, revealed in the Guardian in January, means that for the first time BT and other public telephone firms will be able to broadcast entertainment services down their lines. For the 17 per cent of homes not covered by cable franchises, the ban will be lifted immediately.

Industry Secretary Margaret Beckett and Culture Secretary Chris Smith announced the move in a paper titled Broadband Britain, published yesterday.

The previous Conservative government slapped the ban

on BT to encourage cable operators to plough funds into building networks. The ban was intended to be for 10 years, but it was uncertain if and when it might come to an end because the previous administration only committed itself to a review in 2002.

In written reply, Mrs Beckett said: "We need to remove the uncertainty created by the previous government over when and how the restrictions they placed on BT and other public telecommunications operators might be lifted. It has become increasingly clear that all operators — including cable —

The paper suggests that BT could later be obliged to modernise its national network because it is a dominant operator of local access networks. It also asks whether public service broadcasting obligations should be imposed on telecom companies entering the sector.



Early relaxation of rules would bring forward new era for broadcasting

What the Guardian said in January

Notebook

Dirty play spells defeat for treaty



Alex Brummer

THE apparent decision by OECD ministers to postpone ratification of the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) until at least January 1999 is a victory for the coalition of lobby interests which objected to giving transnational corporations the upper hand in their dealings with governments.

Investment liberalisation, like trade liberalisation, essentially serves the greater economic and consumer good because it will encourage an increase in international investment in a broader range of countries, creating more growth, jobs and GDP per capita.

With the right for investment to roam comes, however, a series of obligations. The failure of the OECD to reflect these adequately in the treaty has become the pact's downfall. The primary worry is environmental. Although many multinationals have become increasingly sensitive to their broader role in society — not Shell's conversion to social responsibility — there are still enterprises where despoliation of the environment goes unchecked.

Similarly, as we know from the studies of child labour, well-known manufacturers and retailers show no compunction about making and selling branded goods which brutally exploit local conditions. These social and environmental objections, together with the complex US politics of the Helms-Burton legislation (which imposes sanctions on companies doing business with Cuba) doomed the MAI project.

That does not mean the deal should be torn up, as some non-governmental organisations are demanding. Much good work on investment liberalisation has been done. The OECD and ministers now need to focus on how best to incorporate durable environmental and labour standards — with binding social requirements — for those firms investing under the protection of the treaty.

Radio waves

DIGITAL television, and in particular the role which Rupert Murdoch will play in the new multi-channel world, has provoked so much debate that the prospects for digital radio have been eclipsed. Yet digital radio, with its ability to provide dozens of channels offering personalised services and programming for every taste, will change the shape and role of the receivers in all of our lives and increase programme choices enormously. Despite the promising commercial potential, only one

consortium has come forward to take part in the licence bidding: a joint proposal by GWR-Ginger, the great virtue of which is that it is a known quantity. GWR is best known through Classic FM (which is terrific), and Ginger, formerly Virgin, boasts DJ Chris Evans as the cool front-person beloved by Labour.

They may be none too pleased about the emergence of a credible second commercial bidder which includes Grundig, Bosch Multimedia, the information services group Intelias and perhaps programme-maker Flextech. The value of the new applicants is that they are offering innovative programming, not a repackaging of the existing output provided by commercial radio.

The interest of Grundig is clearly to be in at the beginning as digital radio receivers come on to the market. But it may also be a good business proposition, because the equity value to be created in the first commercial digital network is being put as high as £220 million.

Plugging leaks

A GREAT deal of market excitement was generated yesterday by the FT's report that a hawk on the monetary policy committee, Charles Goodhart, apparently switched sides at the last meeting giving a clear majority to those who believe that the repo rate should remain unchanged at 7.25 per cent. This was not a leak to rank alongside last autumn's leaked halloo on EMU, but nevertheless the market authorities might well be interested in knowing where the high-quality information of Professor Goodhart's vote came from. If the monetary policy committee is to maintain its credibility, it should ensure that all players in the market have the same information at the same time.

In some respects Prof Goodhart may have brought this problem upon himself. In his admirable interview in Sunday Business (which seems to have been missed by most market players) he left little doubt that he was developing a much more benign view of inflation in the later market, one of the factors that has encouraged the hawks to push for higher rates. It is not a long jump from that position to the perfectly reasonable story that Prof Goodhart had broken the deadlock by changing sides.

What all this does point to is the unnecessarily long lead time (about five weeks) during which the minutes are meant to remain secret. The best reason for the lead time is that it gives some breathing space to the authorities when they can watch a critical piece of data or a market movement before acting on their collective findings.

At a time when Britain is at the forefront of the campaign to bring transparency to all economic policy-making, however, the case for early publication — within, say, two weeks of the policy-making meeting — becomes ever more seductive.

Interest shock at Northern Rock

Rupert Jones

AHIGH street bank has outraged some of its savers customers and delighted others by moving up to 200,000 of them, without warning, into accounts paying different rates of interest.

Some Northern Rock customers woke up yesterday morning to find a letter telling them they would now be worse off by perhaps £40 or more a month, while the lucky ones had been handed an unsolicited mini-windfall.

Angry customers took issue with the "important improvements" that Northern Rock has made to its range of postal accounts. The bank has cut the number of such accounts from 11 to three, after criticism

Those worst affected include customers who held Select 90 and Select 60 accounts. These have been moved into 60 and 30-day accounts offering more user-friendly conditions but paying up to 2.05 per cent per annum less interest.

Lynne Curry said she had been moved without consent or consultation out of a 60-day account paying 7.05 per cent annual interest into a 30-day account paying 5 per cent. She has £24,800 in her account and the change means that over one month she will be £22 worse off in terms of interest.

The new rates were effective as of yesterday.

A spokesman for the bank said: "There are winners and losers. Some of them have experienced a rise in rates and others a reduction in rates."

TOURIST RATES — BANK SELLS

Australia 2.49	Germany 2.9101	Malaysia 6.22	Singapore 2.58
Austria 24.44	Greece 506.83	Malta 0.63	South Africa 8.21
Belgium 59.59	Hong Kong 12.59	Netherlands 3.2504	Spain 245.54
Canada 2.326	India 65.50	New Zealand 2.90	Sweden 12.48
Cyprus 0.85	Ireland 1.1524	Norway 12.07	Switzerland 2.40
Denmark 11.14	Israel 6.275	Portugal 297.18	Turkey 288.570
Finland 8.20	Italy 2.887	Saudi Arabia 5.14	USA 1.8310
France 9.73			

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